

## Speech at Unveiling of Cedar Cone

*Thank you Mark Brunton for the Manakitanga. Many of our ancestors were people of the land, so it seems entirely appropriate as the Tangata whenua of this land that we begin with the Manakitanga. Thank you.*

Your Worship the Mayor, Family and Friends,

Thank people for being here for such an important and significant occasion for the Lebanese Community of Dunedin.

Some of you would have heard me say last night, when I welcomed everyone to The Gathering that the reasons for holding this event are:

- § To celebrate our culture
- § To celebrate our identity
- § But especially to celebrate a bygone era.

In 2003 the decision was made to sell our beloved clubrooms. I feel that decision struck a major blow to our community. In many ways it felt like we had lost our identity.

We had lost something that symbolised our community.

For some it felt like we had lost our *raison d'être* (our reason for being).

In the face of this perceived loss, the committee deemed it important to leave a legacy to our people.

Today was originally intended to simply be a ceremonial planting of the Cedar tree, but the City of Dunedin, in particular the Botanic Garden, allowed us a “right to occupy” a much bigger piece of land. This generous gesture was the seed from which grew the realisation of our dream of leaving a legacy to our people.

We thought it appropriate to extend the symbolism beyond the living tree to the sculpting of the Cedar Cone cast in bronze.

Just as the cone is an off-shoot of the mighty Cedar, it also serves as a symbol for the Diaspora of our forebears, both of which share a common lineage to Lebanon.

This wonderful feature will serve as a permanent reminder that will span the generations. Just as this garden comprises many strata, so too is the community in which we live multi-layered. It will serve to commemorate and honour those who have gone before us. For the current generation it is a celebration of our Lebanese heritage – for future generations we wish for it to be a reminder of the pioneers who preceded them – a “touchstone” for our people.

On behalf of our community, I would like to thank the City of Dunedin for making the land available for us to make this special gift to the City.

I would also like to thank:

Stuart Griffiths – Project Manager. Having had Stuart manage the project on our behalf gave us peace of mind and the confidence from the outset that everything would happen as it should, and on time.

Mick Reece - Community and Recreation Services Manager for the DCC – for his support from the start and throughout the entire project. Mick's support has made such a difference.

Alan Matchett – Director, Botanic Garden & Cemeteries for the DCC. His attention to detail and protocol kept the project directed throughout. And to his team Barbara Wheeler and Dylan Norfield for their site management.

Mick Field – The Botanic Garden's Architect. A very gifted man. A visionary thinker, who is able to translate his visions into reality in a very quick and efficient way.

Delta Contractors – Paul Cahill, Project Manager and his team Saaen (Sharn) and Richard, who constructed this site.

Graham Burgess and Alan Stocker – Abrasive Concepts. These two gentlemen (and I mean that in the true sense of the word), know their craft inside out. They made it so easy to work with them from day one, and made a complex process seem simple.

A special thank you must be made to Bryn Jones – Sculptor. He is the person responsible for sculpting this magnificent replica of the Cedar Cone. He is a very talented, gifted and humble man who just gets on with quietly producing masterpieces. He is a true artisan.

Our final thank you is directed at our Event Manager, Kerry Buchan– for her enthusiasm, endless suggestions and creative thinking in relation to this site.

It makes me proud and humbled to have worked with such a professional team of people on such a meaningful project.

On behalf of our community, a sincere thank you to you all.