

Blue Poles park opens in new suburb of Whitlam



By [Megan Doherty](#)

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Greyson (3) and Paige (7) Cooper, of Macgregor, check out the new park. Picture: Elsa Kurtz

How utterly brilliant is the name of the new playground opened in Whitlam?

The new site will be known as Blue Poles park.

The name commemorates the *Blue Poles* artwork purchased back in 1973 - approved by then-prime minister Gough Whitlam, for whom the suburb in the north-west of Canberra is named.

Whitlam showed a fair bit of gumption in green-lighting the purchase of the Jackson Pollock painting, which at the time cost \$1.3 million, the most spent on an American artwork at the time, bought by the National Gallery of Australia, where it still now hangs and has become the gallery's most-viewed artwork.



Blue Poles is now the National Gallery's most-viewed artwork. Picture: Marina Neil

The Whitlam Institute says the then PM's decision was "criticised across the board", and many art critics said the NGA had been taken in by "the art promotional system of the USA".

"Whitlam responded to these criticisms by saying: 'If Australian galleries were limited by the comprehension of the right honourable gentleman they would be very bare and archaic indeed'

"Whitlam even put a photograph of *Blue Poles* on Christmas cards from his family that year, so confident he was in its legacy."



The Cooper siblings find another fun part of the park. Picture: Elesa Kurtz

And now, the children of Whitlam, the suburb, are playing in a park, named after that wonderful, awe-inspiring 2-metre by nearly five-metre work.

"It's fantastic to see a momentous artwork now come to life in a play setting, just ahead of the 50-year anniversary of its purchase by Australia," Housing and Suburban Development Minister Yvette Berry said at the playground's opening this week.

"Children and families will have the opportunity to enjoy the new park – another great outdoor area for Canberra to stay active."



Whitlam the suburb will eventually be home to about 2100 families. Picture: Elesa Kurtz

The playground features a waterplay area that will reuse the water by funnelling it into the root zones of the trees. It also has 9000 native shrubs and grasses, 350 native trees and natural rock boulders.

Ms Berry said about 50 households resided now in Whitlam but it would eventually be home to around 2100 families.

"The Blue Poles park will be a place for play and adventure for many years to come," she said.