

State Minister's Message

Issue 6 (12 March, 2009)

A regular update from the Office of the Minister for Veterans' Affairs, The Hon. Michael Atkinson M.P.

Trooper Mark Donaldson VC visits South Australia

Yesterday, Trooper Mark Donaldson VC visited South Australia. Trooper Donaldson was awarded the Victoria Cross for Australia on 16 January 2009 for "exceptional gallantry" shown in fire-fight while on service in Afghanistan last year in recognition of an action that among other things saw him run 80 metres across fire swept ground to rescue a wounded Afghan interpreter that he had only known for five days!

Last night, Trooper Donaldson joined with Premier Rann and Minister Atkinson to launch the "With Courage and Humanity" regional tour of South Australia of Major Peter Badcoe's Victoria Cross and the Yandruwandha Burke and Wills Breastplate. In one of the broadest recent gatherings, nearly 200 members of the veterans' community representing 30 South Australian ex-service organisations were present for the launch of the regional tour.

It was a tremendous coup for South Australia to host Trooper Donaldson's first official interstate visit. Trooper Donaldson was overwhelmed by the response he received from serving members of the Defence Force, veterans ranging from the our most recent conflicts to WW2, ex Prisoners of War, War Widows' and community leaders.

Trooper Donaldson said he would "never forget" this first interstate welcome and encouraged as many people as possible to see Major Peter Badcoe's Victoria Cross and the Yandruwandha Burke and Wills Breastplate when they go on tour.

The regional tour fulfils the State Government's promise to give all South Australians the opportunity to see the medal and Breastplate.

Earlier in the day, Trooper Donaldson attended a reception at Government House with His Excellency the Governor, Rear Admiral Kevin Scarce AC, CSC and winners of the Premiers' ANZAC Spirit School Prize. The six prize winners are school children from throughout South Australia who were thrilled to have had the opportunity to meet Trooper Donaldson. They are winners of an essay competition sponsored by the State Government. Their prize includes a tour of overseas battlefields and they will spend ANZAC Day 2009 at Villers Brettoneaux on the Western Front.