

State Minister's Message Issue 12 (22 April, 2009)

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

2009 ANZAC Day Message

It is three days until ANZAC Day.

It is a time for us to reflect on the contribution made to the defence of our nation by all who have donned the uniform, past and present.

I know there is one thing that Australians put above all else - they will never choose to leave a comrade on the battlefield alive or dead. When circumstances give them no choice they do so reluctantly - but they never forget.

So, with only hours to go before our ANZAC commemoration I am pleased to see that two outstanding issues - one that has haunted some Australian families for nearly 93 years might soon be solved.

A mass grave containing the remains of 191 Australian soldiers, 91 of whom are thought to be South Australian, was discovered in Pheasant Wood near Fromelles in France some months ago.

These men are thought to have died in the Battle of Fromelles that was fought over 19 - 20 July 1916. These men were among the 5533 Australians killed in a battle that was described at the time as "...the worst 24 hours in Australia's entire history."

Australian soldiers will never willingly desert their mates and the unknown circumstance surrounding the loss of those men has weighed heavily on their colleagues, their families and the whole nation.

I hope that the investigations that begin today will bring solace to those impacted by this tragedy.

Yesterday saw another similar announcement that is important to every South Australian, and in particular Vietnam Veterans. Wreckage belonging to the Canberra bomber aircraft of 2 Squadron R.A.A.F. that was lost on a bombing mission on 3 November 1970 has been located in a remote area of Vietnam.

This plane was piloted by Flying Officer Michael Herbert of North Glenelg. His loss represents one of the last and most enduring links our State has with the Vietnam War.

Michael and his navigator Robert Carver of Queensland are the last two Australian servicemen lost missing in action from the Vietnam War.

Should their fate be determined it will bring to a close an issue that has impacted us all as a nation.

As Minister for Veterans' Affairs in South Australia I acknowledge all those who have served.

On ANZAC Day this year I will remember all those who have died in our service. I will particularly spare a thought for Michael Herbert and his family, and all those other brave men.

I hope that these latest discoveries bring well earned solace to their families, friends and comrades.

Mental Health Awareness in Veterans' Community

The Commonwealth Minister for Veterans' Affairs, Alan Griffin has launched a book of stories for veterans and their families about their personal mental health journey. *Beyond the Call* aims to raise awareness about mental illness and emphasises the vital role families, partners, carers and health professionals play in supporting veterans with mental health related issues.

The website at-ease.dva.gov.au also gives veterans and family members a one-stop-shop for mental health advice and services. For a copy of *Beyond the Call* please email at-ease@dva.gov.au or call 1800 026 185.

With Courage and Humanity Regional Tour - Weekly Update

The tour to date has travelled to three locations – Victor Harbor (21 March), Two Wells (15 April) and Kingscote, Kangaroo Island (16-17 April). At Victor Harbor, the display was part of the opening of the new R.S.L. Clubrooms. The Two Wells R.S.L. and Two Wells Public Library hosted the display at Two Wells. Kangaroo Island Council hosted the display at Kingscote which was attended by local residents, interstate and international tourists and members of local ESO's.

In the coming week the Badcoe VC will be on display in the following location:

22-24 April	Port Augusta	Port Augusta Public Library Civic Centre, 4 Mackay Street, Port Augusta 22 April: 12 noon-6.00pm 23 April: 9.00am-5.00pm 24 April: 9.00am-12 noon
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