

State Minister's Message Issue 22 (8 July, 2009)

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

Private Edward "Ted" Kenna VC

Minister Atkinson expresses his sorrow at the passing of Australia's last remaining Victoria Cross recipient from the Second World War, Private Edward "Ted" Kenna.

Private Kenna died yesterday aged 90 in Geelong, Victoria.

Private Kenna was a great Australian. He demonstrated courage in the most trying of circumstances. He was awarded the Victoria Cross for action at Wewak, New Guinea whilst serving with 2/4th Battalion, 19th Brigade, 6th Division as a private. Private Kenna, with complete disregard for his own safety and without orders, placed himself directly in the enemy's line of fire so he could take out a machine gun crew. This enabled his company to capture the enemy's position.

Three weeks later Private Kenna was struck in the mouth by an explosive bullet and hospitalised. The wound marked the end of his combat duty and he was discharged in December 1946.

Private Kenna made an outstanding contribution to the nation and will be remembered for his courage.

Private Kenna returned to Victoria where he married and raised a family. He was an active member of the Hamilton community and a lifetime member of the Hamilton RSL. In the year 2000 he received a Centenary Medal for his service to the Veterans' Community.

He is survived by wife Marjorie, three of his children and many grandchildren.

On behalf of all South Australians Minister Atkinson thanks Private Kenna for his service to Australia.

\$50,000 Donation to the R.S.L. for ANZAC Day

Following this year's successful ANZAC Day commemorations, the Rann Government has decided to provide a record \$50,000 extra funding for next year's commemorations – the first time the State Government has done so.

The extra \$50,000 will be donated to the Returned & Services League of Australia (SA branch) to assist with the costs of commemorative activities such as ANZAC Day and Remembrance Day.

Minister Atkinson says the donation to the R.S.L. was in addition to the Rann Government's ongoing commitment to support ANZAC Day celebrations.

"In March I announced the State Government would supply \$10,000 of annual funding to provide for big television screens at the dawn service and every year police and public transport provide support services," Minister Atkinson says.

"ANZAC day is one of the most important days on our national calendar and we are more than happy to provide what assistance we can to enhance this special occasion.

Returned & Services League of Australia (SA branch) President Jock Statton says he is grateful to the Government for its generosity.

“This amount will have a significant impact as the costs to stage commemorative events has been met by the RSL, with government and councils contributing with logistical assistance.”

Search for last Missing Servicemen from Vietnam Commences

The excavation team travelling to Vietnam to search for the last two Australians missing in action in the Vietnam War, Pilot Officer Robert Charles Carver and Flying Officer Michael Patrick Herbert, departed on Wednesday, 8 July, and will be in country for a 10-day mission. Pilot Officer Carver and Flying Officer Herbert disappeared on 3 November, 1970 when their RAAF Canberra bomber A84-231 crashed. Michael Herbert is from South Australia.

The expert team includes an explosive expert, air crash investigator, archaeologist and forensic odontologist. The crash site in Quang Nam province near the border with Laos is in a remote and hilly location with dense jungle.

Minister Atkinson hopes that the mission will recover the last two Australians missing in action in the Vietnam War and bring a resolution to this tragedy that has meant so much to the ex-service community. South Australians' thoughts will be with the missing men's families during what must be a very difficult time.