

State Minister's Message

The Veterans' Advisory Council (VAC) has already demonstrated what a priceless resource it will be for the State. At the inaugural VAC meeting on 12 February, the VAC considered a request from Government to provide advice on the naming of the South Road/ANZAC Highway Underpass. The name "Gallipoli Underpass" was the unanimous recommendation of the VAC.

In recommending a name for the underpass, the VAC had regard for the aims of those who in 1917 sought the renaming of Bay Road to "ANZAC Highway". The Council considered that as "Gallipoli" signifies the very beginning of the ANZAC legend, it fitted perfectly within the overall tradition of remembrance created by the ANZAC Highway. The Gallipoli Underpass Project will incorporate an ANZAC Memorial Garden dedicated to the ANZAC Alliance with New Zealand. The Memorial Garden will form an integral part of the overall theme to acknowledge the ANZAC heritage. The name "Gallipoli Underpass" has received overwhelming support from the ex-service community.

In the three subsequent meetings of the VAC, on 26 March, 7 May and 18 June, Council members have been focussed on the creation of an Ex-Service Commemorative Calendar, the study of military history in schools, State Government concessions to veterans, identifying veterans as a "special needs" group in recognition of the impact of the unique contribution they have made to Australia involving hardship and sacrifice during and post service, the national Vietnam Veterans' Family Survey, and identifying potential projects for funding consideration as part of the Centenary of ANZAC campaign that will commence on Remembrance Day 2014 and continue through until Remembrance Day 2018.

In exciting news for our State, the 7RAR Battle Group will relocate from its current location in Darwin to new facilities within the Edinburgh Defence Precinct. With 1,200 personnel it is a mechanised infantry battalion equipped with upgraded M113 Armoured Personnel Carriers, a mechanised combat engineer squadron, a self-propelled artillery battery, a combat services support team and a detachment from the headquarters of the 1st Brigade.

The Battle Group relocation will provide huge economic opportunities for South Australia and reinforce our position as the Defence State. 1,900 people are forecast to arrive in Adelaide in early 2011 including soldiers, their partners and children. A large portion of these will integrate into northern suburb communities creating demand for housing as well as education, childcare, sporting and medical facilities. Once fully operational, the Battle Group is expected to contribute over \$100 million per annum to the South Australian economy and support 1675 jobs. The details of a welcome event open to the public on 10 October, 2009 will be provided in the near future.

The "With Courage and Humanity" regional tour of South Australia of Major Peter Badcoe's Victoria Cross and the Yandruwandha Burke and Wills Breastplate that was launched by Trooper Mark Donaldson VC on 11 March visited seventeen regional centres and concluded on 19 June at Wudinna. The tour allowed thousands of South Australians to see the Victoria Cross awarded to Major Badcoe for his gallantry during the Vietnam War and also the breastplate awarded to the Yandruwandha peoples in recognition of the assistance they afforded the members of the ill-fated Burke and Wills Expedition in the north of our state in 1861.

I am sure the tour has taught many South Australians more about one of their most gallant sons. It also explains to the community how much we value the contribution made by all men and women who have served this nation in times of peace and war.

The tour was funded by the State Government and coordinated by the History Trust of South Australia with assistance from the RSL. I am grateful to the SA History Trust, Ms Kate Walsh, the RSL and the police security team for their professionalism and assistance. The Badcoe VC will now go on display at the National War Memorial in Canberra, and will return to South Australia when required for special occasions. The breastplate will return to the SA Museum.

Over 150 people attended the Aboriginal Veterans' Commemorative Service at the South Australian National War Memorial on Friday 29 May, 2009. This commemorative service originated in 2007 as part of Reconciliation Week to acknowledge the 60th anniversary of the granting of full rights of citizenship to our Aboriginal peoples. The broad acceptance given to it has ensured it has become a permanent fixture on South Australia's commemorative calendar. This year's service was fully funded by the State Government and co-ordinated by Veterans SA, Reconciliation SA, the Commonwealth Department of Veterans' Affairs, Legacy and the Returned and Services League of Australia.

Aboriginal Australians have served with distinction and very little recognition in every conflict in which Australia has been involved, from the Boer War and Gallipoli to Iraq and Afghanistan. An Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander War Memorial is currently being planned and will be constructed adjacent the Torrens Parade Ground. It will commemorate the service and sacrifice of all Aboriginal veterans. Commemorative inscribed pavers can be purchased by telephoning the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander War Memorial Project on 8226 8881.

More information about the achievements of Veterans' Affairs portfolio and the biographies of the VAC members can be found at www.veteranssa.agd.sa.gov.au or by calling (08) 8207 1723.

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