

David Harris

Minister for Aboriginal Affairs and Treaty, Minister for Gaming and Racing,
Minister for Veterans, Minister for Medical Research, Minister for the Central Coast

**Media Release****Commemorating the Battle for Australia 81 years on****Wednesday, 6 September 2023**

On the first Wednesday in September, Australians come together for Battle of Australia Day, TO commemorate the first defeat of Japanese forces on Australian soil during World War II.

Minister for Veterans David Harris lay a sprig of wattle today, alongside members of the veteran community at the Cenotaph in Martin Place Sydney on the 81st anniversary of this crucial victory.

Prime Minister John Curtin used the term 'Battle for Australia' after the fall of Singapore on 15 February 1942. Soon after, Australia suffered direct Japanese attacks, including the bombing of Darwin, with many merchant and Navy ships sunk defending our shores.

Over 39,000 Australians died during the Second World War, most of them in the campaigns in Asia and the Pacific. Many more were wounded in action and approximately 22,000 Australians became prisoners of war.

During the Great War, the golden wattle was used as a symbol of unity on the home front, and this continued through the Second World War. The resilience of wattle, to withstand our nation's harsh weather of droughts, winds and bushfires, represents the spirit of the Australian people and sprigs of wattle are laid as a tribute for the Battle of Australia commemoration.

Minister for Veterans, David Harris said:

"The Second World War was the first time that our nation and our land was under attack.

"Today we come together to remember the efforts of our veterans who protected our nation, who fought to defend our border, our mainland and throughout the Pacific to keep us safe.

"Their efforts, eighty-one years ago, contributed to the first defeat of Japanese forces on land in New Guinea, with the Battle of Milne Bay.

"Whilst the early years of the war focused on Europe, it was during 1942 that Australian forces drew on the spirit of the Anzacs to hold off and eventually overcome the Japanese along the Kokoda Track and other significant battles in New Guinea and throughout the Pacific.

"On the home front, we defended the attacks in Darwin and later in Sydney Harbour. All these efforts helped to win the war against Japan.

"It is these efforts and sacrifices that we remember today. Lest we forget."

Immediate past President of the Battle for Australia Association in NSW, Colonel Davis Ross CSC (Ret'd) said:

"Today we honour the service and sacrifice of our soldiers, sailors and air crew as well as all the efforts on the home front.

"We remember their contributions against the aggression of the Japanese forces, that led to a victory in the Battle for Australia."

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