

David Harris

Minister for Aboriginal Affairs and Treaty
Minister for Gaming and Racing
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Media Release

Underground air raid shelter tours for war descendants highlight events to commemorate 80th anniversary of VP Day

Images of Minister for Veterans David Harris and Anzac War Memorial Senior Historian Brad Manera in the tunnels and with the searchlight plus historical shots available [here](#)

Tuesday, 12 August 2025

Eighty years ago this week, Australians celebrated Victory in the Pacific when Japan accepted the Allied demand for unconditional surrender on 15 August 1945, ending the Second World War.

When news broke around our state and nation that after five years, 11 months and 11 days of fighting, the war was finally over, people gathered in cities and towns and cried and hugged in jubilation.

The NSW Government is commemorating this important anniversary of VP Day with a series of activities and events to honour the service of our veterans, their families and all who endured the war at home.

Descendants of Second World War veterans are being offered an exclusive opportunity to visit the Air Raid Shelters in the disused St James train tunnels beneath Hyde Park for a guided talk. The tours of the shelters deep below the CBD, includes an opportunity to explore the inscriptions etched on the walls by veterans and Sydneysiders who had hunkered underground when the air raid sirens sounded during the war.

For the first time, members of the public will also be able to get up close to a painstakingly restored searchlight, used 80 years ago to light up the skies around Sydney to identify enemy aircraft, on display this week at the northern forecourt of the Anzac Memorial in Hyde Park.

At 6:15pm this Friday, this magnificent piece of history will again light up the Sydney sky as a tribute to our Second World War servicemen and servicewomen, during a VP Day commemoration at the Anzac Memorial from 5.15pm.

A commemorative service is also taking place at the Cenotaph in Martin Place on Friday at 12:30pm.

Interested members of the public can join the Anzac Memorial's historians for a lecture *Air Raids, Searchlights, Celebrations: Sydney Home Front Stories, 1939-1945* at 4pm on Friday at the Anzac Memorial auditorium, Hyde Park .

People will hear stories from the air raid shelters to the searchlights that scanned the skies for enemy aircraft and later, the jubilant celebrations through the streets to welcome the longed-for news of peace in August 1945.

This is a free event but due to space limitations bookings are essential. To book a ticket please visit: <https://www.eventbrite.com.au/e/air-raids-searchlights-celebrations-sydney-home-front-stories-1939-1945-tickets-1528435695309>

A number of veterans of the Second World War have also shared their stories for an online showcase that is enabling current and future generations to continue to learn about their service and sacrifice. View the 'Second World War Stories' here:

<https://www.warmemorialsregister.nsw.gov.au/nsw-stories/theme/second-world-war-stories>

During the Second World War, Australian forces were engaged in campaigns across the Pacific – in New Guinea, Bougainville, New Britain, Borneo, and in the Philippines – and Australian prisoners of the Japanese were spread throughout Asia. While on the ‘home front’, women and children did all they could to help support the war effort and manage the heavy impacts it had on their lives.

For more information visit: <https://www.anzacmemorial.nsw.gov.au/event/commemorate-80-years-victory-pacific>

Minister for Veterans David Harris said:

“On Friday we come together on a special anniversary of VP Day to remember all the men and women who served during the Second World War, abroad in Europe and the Pacific, as well as those who served and the public who endured the war on the home front.

“We honour the nearly 1 million Australians who served, and the 39,000 Australians who made the ultimate sacrifice for the cause of peace and the freedom we enjoy to this day.

“We thank them for their sacrifices, through conflict and, for many, long periods in captivity. Their contributions helped keep us safe and our nation from further attack during a war that was fought so close to our shores.

“I encourage our community to remember the service of our veterans this week and particularly on Friday, and to visit the Anzac Memorial in Hyde Park and have a look at the searchlight currently on display that will be fired up for the first time in 80 years on Friday, to commemorate the anniversary.”

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