MEDIA RELEASE

Wednesday, 7 September 2022

80 YEARS SINCE THE BATTLE FOR AUSTRALIA

The service and sacrifice of those who defended Australia during the Second World War were remembered today with a ceremony at the Cenotaph in Martin Place, Sydney, to commemorate the 80th anniversary of the Battle for Australia.

Minister for Transport, Veterans and Western Sydney David Elliott joined Colonel David Ross CSC Ret'd, President of the Battle for Australia Association NSW, to lay a sprig of wattle at the Cenotaph.

Mr Elliott said the first Wednesday in September was a day to remember and honour those soldiers, sailors and air crew who served abroad and on the home front.

"Today we come together to remember the efforts of our veterans who protected our nation, defending our border, our mainland and the Pacific. Eighty years ago today those efforts contributed to the first defeat of Japanese forces on land in the Battle of Milne Bay," Mr Elliott said.

"Prime Minister Curtin declared we were in a Battle for Australia in early 1942, and soon after our country suffered direct attacks as a result of the fighting to our north. Our cities were bombed and torpedoed, and many merchant and navy ships were sunk protecting our land.

"Throughout 1942 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 while on the home front forces defended attacks in Darwin and Sydney Harbour," Mr Elliott said.

Colonel Ross said more than 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.

"We remember the contributions and efforts of all servicemen and servicewomen against the aggression of the Japanese forces that lead to victory in the Battle for Australia and thank those who paused today to remember the sacrifices made by all who served to protect our nation," Colonel Ross said.

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