



Victor Dominello MP

Minister for Citizenship and Communities
Minister for Aboriginal Affairs

MEDIA RELEASE

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HONOURING NSW ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER DIGGERS

Minister for Citizenship and Communities Victor Dominello today announced *Wartime Legends*, a Centenary of Anzac initiative encouraging special recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders' military service during the First World War.

Mr Dominello said *Wartime Legends* included an online 'How to Guide' for schools, local RSLs, businesses, government agencies and local councils to incorporate commemorations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders' military service in their activities from 2014 to 2018.

"The Centenary is an opportunity to deepen our understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders' contribution to Australia's First World War campaigns through local commemorative activities.

"Sadly the service of around 400 Aboriginal Australians who fought in Gallipoli and on the Western Front was largely neglected, with Aboriginal veterans facing prejudice and exclusion after the war.

"*Wartime Legends* encourages appropriate acknowledgement of Aboriginal veterans – their invaluable service to our nation and the hardship which confronted them both before and after the First World War," Mr Dominello said.

Rotary Club of Sydney is the first participant in *Wartime Legends* and has invited an Aboriginal serviceman to be guest speaker at its luncheon on 22 April 2014.

Club President Geoff Wilbow, who will represent Rotary at the Aboriginal Anzac Day Service in Redfern Park said inclusion was the key to raising awareness about the overseas service of NSW's Aboriginal veterans.

"Building goodwill and promoting fairness are core values of Rotary. Commemorating the stories of NSW Aboriginal soldiers during the Centenary of WWI aligns clearly with these values so we are pleased to be a partner in this initiative," Mr Wilbow said.

NSW Centenary of Anzac Advisory Council Deputy Chair Lieutenant General Ken Gillespie AC DSC CSM (Ret'd) said Aboriginal people from NSW had been represented in all major Australian Defence Force operations from the First World War through to modern conflicts in Afghanistan and the Middle East.

"The Advisory Council recognises the importance of local organisations working in partnership with Aboriginal veterans' groups to ensure their place in our military history is appropriately remembered as part of grassroots Centenary initiatives.

“I encourage all NSW organisations planning Centenary of Anzac programs to utilise *Wartime Legends* as a vehicle to promote and share their initiatives to commemorate Aboriginal diggers,” Lt Gen Gillespie said.

President of the NSW Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Veterans Association David Williams said the NSW initiative would tie in with this year’s NAIDOC Week theme, ‘*Serving Country: Centenary & Beyond*’.

“Our Association is proud to support initiatives which broaden public awareness of the significant contribution that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders have made in defence of our country across many theatres of war.

“All Australians must also understand the poor treatment of our ex-servicemen and women who were denied the right to vote, veterans’ benefits and excluded from Anzac Day events,” Mr Williams said.

Information about how organisations can participate in *Wartime Legends* and other Centenary of Anzac initiatives in NSW can be found at:
<http://www.veterans.nsw.gov.au/centenary/>.

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