



# KOKODA MEMORIAL NEWSLETTER

## 2010 EDITION

### OPENING OF RALPH HONNER EDUCATION CENTRE



Minister for Veterans' Affairs Alan Griffin 3rd R, with Gary Miller, John Honner 2nd L, and board members.

The Ralph Honner Education Centre was officially opened by then Premier of NSW, the Hon. Nathan Rees, at the VP Day commemorations held on August 14th, 2009 at the Kokoda Track Memorial Walkway.

The Centre, located near to the Kiosk, represents a state-of-the-art educational facility, equipped with the latest multi-media technologies. The Centre will reinforce the ideals of the Walkway by providing an enhanced learning experience for the 2,500 plus students who visit the Walkway each year. A versatile learning space, the Centre can be readily configured for a range of activities, including interaction with other organisations via the Internet. A permanent display of photographic murals enlarged from Australian War Memorial original photographs assist in explaining the hardships and sacrifices made by Australian troops in one of the harshest battlefields of the Second World War.

In an excellent address, delivered before several hundred visitors, Mr Rees spoke of the grave peril facing Australia in 1942 when the threat of invasion loomed large and great sacrifices were required to safeguard the nation's sovereignty. Mr Rees paid tribute to the members of the armed forces who courageously halted the Japanese advance in New Guinea, and to one of their most effective and highly regarded commanders - Lieutenant Colonel Ralph Honner, DSO, MC. In paying tribute to Ralph Honner, Mr Rees described him as a "decent man, self-effacing and scrupulously honest - a man of the highest integrity and unassuming faith". There can surely be no greater role model for present and future young Australians. Ralph Honner led the 39th Battalion during the strategic fighting withdrawal along the Kokoda Track, and a contingent of former battalion members from Victoria travelled to Sydney

by van to join other veterans for the opening.

In speaking on behalf of the Honner family, Ralph's son John delivered a most interesting and insightful address concerning his father's eventful life. He was a great soldier with a love of good literature, a fine writer, sportsman, and in the post war years, a diplomat and political party office holder. John believes that as a former teacher, his father would be delighted to have an education centre named after him.

The Mayor of the City of Canada Bay, Cr. Angelo Tsirekas, described the Ralph Honner Education Centre as "a wonderful new facility that our community can now utilise", and that "it is also an important educational resource which will offer school students a unique insight into Australia's military heritage".

The Kokoda Track Memorial Walkway Chairman, Mr Rusty Priest, thanked Mr Rees for delivering an outstanding address that "spoke from the heart", and he further commented that Mr Rees "demonstrated a great understanding of the New Guinea Campaign and its true historical significance for Australia." Mr Priest acknowledged the initial role played by former Premier Morris Iemma in making available \$400,000 of NSW State Government money for the Centre, and thanked the City of Canada Bay for their generous contribution of \$300,000.

Mr Priest also thanked QANTAS executive, Mr Michael Ali, for sponsoring travel from Papua New Guinea for a contingent of "Fuzzy Wuzzy Angels", and he acknowledged the great contribution that this special group made during the Second World War carrying wounded Australian soldiers along the Kokoda Track in hostile and difficult conditions.

Following the opening of the Ralph Honner Education Centre by Mr Rees, a cake was cut and enjoyed by those present, with plenty of time afterwards for meeting old comrades, reminiscing, and enjoying the company of those who had travelled from near and far for this hallmark occasion.



Former Premier Nathan Rees, Angela D'Amore Member for Drummoyne and Rusty Priest cutting celebratory cake flanked by veterans from 39th Battalion.

# PATHWAY UPGRADE HAS GIVEN THE MEMORIAL A NEW LOOK

In December 2010 the Kokoda Track Memorial Walkway ( KTMW) Board commissioned the Construction Company Paynter Dixon Pty Limited to provide a specification covering all works deemed necessary to replace the original brick paved pathway. They employed Meinhardt Engineers to assist.



Newly concreted pathway.

The works included the removal of the 8x00 metre long paved pathway (approx 15 yrs old ); supply and laying of a coloured, coved finish, concrete slab pathway; and the supply and laying of new conduits along the entire length of the walkway to accommodate new fibre optic cables to provide voice transmission to 23 commemorative stations along with data monitoring .

A sub-committee of the KTMW board was convened to oversee the works and ensure that all aspects of construction were completed to satisfaction. The sub-committee accepted Council's recommendation to appoint Jet Civil as the Primary Contractor .

Landscape Architect Matthew Taylor who designed the Kokoda Track Memorial Walkway, selected the colour scheme. The new surface had a charcoal pigment introduced to it while the concrete was wet. The surface was then sealed to minimise staining and colour washout with a charcoal tinted wet seal.

The colour replicates the Black muddy conditions of Kokoda. Red colour was selected for the Bruce Kingsbury Path section through the Hospital Car Park and Rose Garden to remind all visitors of

the terrible loss of life and the blood spilt during the war against the invading Japanese forces.

To further upgrade the area extra planting was done along the path and mulched. This was required as the original understorey planting had thinned out. The plant species used were a mixture of Australian natives and a species of Rhododendron native to the New Guinea highlands. This particular species of Rhododendron, known as Vireya, thrives in high humidity and a hot summer while flowering prolifically. We are grateful to Ben Richards from City of Canada Bay Council who provided valuable advice and supervised the remediation work .



Newly concreted pathway.



VISIT OUR WEBSITE AT:  
[www.kokodawalkway.com.au](http://www.kokodawalkway.com.au)

# CCTV SYSTEM UPGRADE

Over the past 10 years the current CCTV system has undergone three upgrades. The original system was manned by the hospital security control room. Funding has generously come from the NSW Government, RSL and community.

Stage 1 saw nine cameras added to protect the areas near the Centre Piece with video surveillance and centralised single channel music with narration when visitors stood in front of the station. Stage-2 extended to the bollard coverage to all stations and added individual station surveillance and narration.

Stage-3, the current enhancement, saw coverage extended to the new Ralph Honner, Education Centre and new fibre optic technology used to improve reliability and clarity.

Stage-3 upgrade was extensive with key components relocated from the Kiosk and new updated surveillance technology added to the Ralph Honner Education Centre.

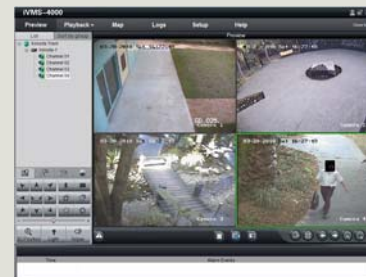
Picture quality has improved by using fibre optic links to each bollard including the addition of a range of cameras with infra red built-in to extend or replace existing cameras. These enhancements improved visibility day and night; delivered better coverage, improved the audio narration and the reliability of the system.

A new pan and tilt camera system delivers round the clock visibility across the car park and enables the security system operators to quickly zoom into unwanted activity that is observed. The recording system uses the latest high resolution compression technology and is able to store approximately one month of video footage. Additional cameras provide a frontal view to capture facial features of vandals walking into the areas and enables those images to be provided to police. The system also reports incidents electronically, via email, to multiple recipients who can then respond appropriately to the incident.

This sophisticated CCTV system has recently been put to the test (July) following a vicious attack on the memorial. We are pleased that footage retrieved have led to an arrest.



Vandal captured on CCTV.



CCTV images.

# DESPICABLE ACTS OF VANDALISM

The vicious nature of the attack on the 16 stations out the 26 which were sprayed with graffiti and saw bollards smashed with a blunt object tells us that it was not a random act but rather one which was deliberate and premeditated. It caused public outrage and many from the veteran and general community would like to have a piece of the vandal/s.

Perhaps what makes it all the more painful is that the memorial had only recently been brought back to a pristine condition after months of construction work to upgrade the pathway. It was looking its best for ANZAC day and the veteran and general community were justifiably proud.

The graffiti have now been removed, however there is still some way to go before the bollards are repaired. The NSW Police and the KTMW Board of Directors are hopeful that the arrest will lead to a conviction.

Something the general public was not aware of is that only a few weeks before, 10 newly planted advanced rhododendrons were stolen and the electrical cables to the cameras were severed. We believe that these acts were not carried out by random louts.

We can be thankful to Premier Keneally and Minister Terenzini for giving the Memorial a sum of \$10,000 towards repairing the damage.



Stations vandalised with graffiti.

# LOCAL SCHOOL AND BUSINESS HELPS TO “GREEN” THE MEMORIAL



Member for Read John Murphy, Rusty Priest and Mayor Angelo Tsirekas pictured receiving donation from students of Concord West Public School towards the repair of damaged stations.



Planting in progress.

Concord West Public School, Canada Bay Council and IKEA at Rhodes have partnered for a three year project in support of the Kokoda Track Memorial Walkway.

Commencing in 2010 for National Tree Planting Day, the first stage of the project involved planting in the new garden area behind the Kokoda Track Memorial Walkway Education Centre. Rob Stevenson from Canada Bay Council has been providing advice for the project and has undertaken the preparation of the site for planting. IKEA provided volunteer staff to assist the students from Concord West Public School with the planting. IKEA also purchased the plants needed for the garden and provided students with morning tea after they have finished their hard work!

For 2011-2012, IKEA and Concord West Public School will work with Canada Bay Council in a number of garden and mangrove areas within the Kokoda Track Memorial Walkway. The school looks forward to making a significant difference through this project, which also ensures that the children develop a deeper understanding of this special memorial.

## THANK YOU TO OUR DONORS

Donations of \$2000 and above received between July 09- June 2010

Campsie RSL sub branch	\$2000
City of Quenbeyan RSL sub branch	\$2000
Granville RSL RSL sub branch	\$4000 (09/10)
Redfern RSL sub branch	\$3000
St Mary's RSL sub branch	\$5000
Canterbury Hurlston Park RSL sub branch	\$5000
Blacktown RSL sub branch	\$5000
Five Dock RSL sub branch	\$5000
Auburn RSL sub branch	\$5000
Castle Hill RSL sub branch	\$6000
Bondi Junction RSL sub branch	\$10,000 (09 /10)
Enfield RSL sub branch	\$20,000 (09/10)

We also take this opportunity to thank all other donors who have made generous donations to the Memorial Walkway over this period.