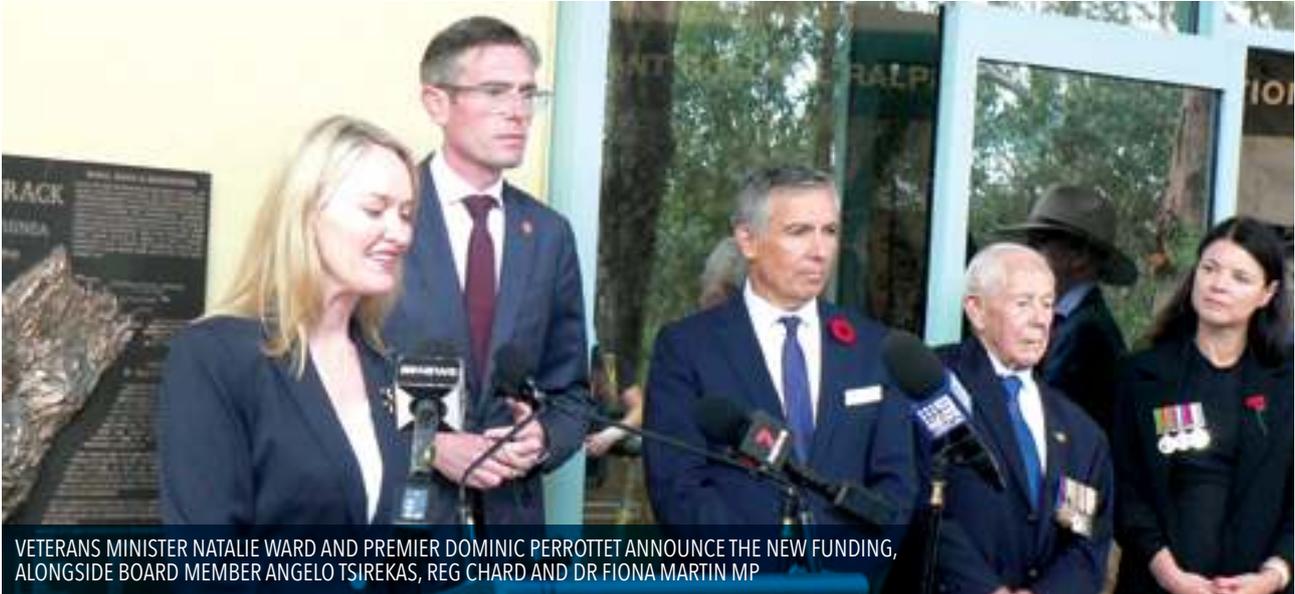




# KOKODATRACK

NOVEMBER 2021

MEMORIAL WALKWAY NEWS



VETERANS MINISTER NATALIE WARD AND PREMIER DOMINIC PERROTTET ANNOUNCE THE NEW FUNDING, ALONGSIDE BOARD MEMBER ANGELO TSIREKAS, REG CHARD AND DR FIONA MARTIN MP

## PREMIER PLEDGES FUNDING

NSW Premier Dominic Perrottet has promised government funding of \$600,000 over four years for the Kokoda Track Memorial Walkway.

The announcement, on Remembrance Day, 11 November, was welcomed by KTMW board chair Jennifer Collins, who thanked the Premier for what she said was "significant funding."

"It will mean that the memorial will continue to educate the younger generation on an important part of our Australian history and maintain it in its pristine condition," she said.

"Next year we will commemorate the 80th anniversary of the raising of the Australian flag at Kokoda village, and this funding will enable us to extend our educational program even further."

Mr Perrottet was making his first visit to the Walkway, accompanied by Veterans Minister Natalie Ward, who said

the funding will also support the application for KTMW to become a Monument of National Significance.

"This funding will ensure we do not forget one of the most significant chapters in our military history," Mrs Ward said.



THE PREMIER AND KTMW CHAIR JENNIFER COLLINS LAID WREATHS ON REMEMBRANCE DAY

"Each year the number of service men and women who served during WWII sadly grows thinner, and memorials such as this provide a vital link to the past so their sacrifice will always be remembered."

The funding will assist with capital works, new technology and one staff member to help facilitate school and community group visits with guided tours by veterans and volunteer guides.

The Premier viewed the new virtual reality program and producer Sean Bacon also demonstrated how tablet devices with augmented reality technology will be used by school groups to learn about the Kokoda campaign as they move from station to station on the Walkway.



# CELEBRATION ON KOKODA DAY

Kokoda Day – 3 November – is always special as we mark the day with a flag-raising service. This year, however, it was also a day of celebration as it was the 25th anniversary of the ceremony to open stage 1 of the Walkway.



THE FLAGS OF AUSTRALIA AND PAPUA NEW GUINEA ARE RAISED

As you will read elsewhere in this newsletter it was the day on which the board launched the virtual and audio reality programs which will enhance the educational experience for visiting school groups, and released the book which records in words and photos the events that have taken place over the past 25 years.



BERT COLLINS, BRUCE ROBERTSON AND REG CHARD WITH KTMW DEPUTY CHAIR CAROLE-ANNE PRIEST

Three WWII veterans were among more than 200 people who attended the service: Bert Collins (105), Bruce Robertson (101) and Reg Chard (98) took part in the raising of the Australian and Papua New Guinea flags and each was presented with a copy of our book *"Their Spirit Lives On"* by board member Carole-Anne Priest.

Our patron, Governor-General David Hurley, was unable to attend but sent a video message which was played during the ceremony.

His Excellency reflected on the toll among Australian soldiers in battles along the Kokoda Track: more than 600 killed and 1600 wounded.



HIS EXCELLENCY GENERAL THE HONOURABLE DAVID HURLEY AC DSC (RETO)

GOVERNOR-GENERAL OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

THE GOVERNOR-GENERAL RECORDED A SPECIAL VIDEO MESSAGE

"More Australian soldiers died in the seven months of fighting in the former Papua than in any other campaign," he said. "We remember them and we honour them."

General Hurley also paid tribute to the board members who had served the Walkway over the previous 25 years, especially Rusty Priest, John Haines and Jennifer Collins for their leadership as chairs, and thanked the veterans who supported the project and the guides who led school groups.

"The Kokoda Track Memorial Walkway is the very embodiment of *Lest We Forget*," he added.

## REG SHOWS THE WAY

There's no stopping our 98-year-old guide! On 22 October Reg Chard threw out a challenge to play his part in Veterans' Health Week. "Walk with me," he declared. "I'll walk 1000 steps along the pathway and let's see if you can keep up with me!"

A dozen people duly accepted the call and Reg led them from end to end, accompanied at the head of the group by KTMW board member Angelo Tsirekas. And at the end of the walk Reg wasn't in the slightest puffed – in fact he looked ready to do it again.



REG CHARD PARTICIPATING IN VETERANS' HEALTH WEEK





## HISTORY COMES ALIVE!



SEAN BACON DEMONSTRATED AR TABLET TO PREMIER DOMINIC PERROTTET

The Virtual Reality (VR) program was launched on Kokoda Day, aimed at adding enormous value to the experience of visitors to the Walkway, especially for the 4500 school pupils who come here each year.

The latest technology has been installed in the Ralph Honner Education Centre to give students an immersive experience, allowing them to imagine that they are there, on the Kokoda Track, with Australian soldiers, sharing their stories along with the environment, the rigours and the dangers.

NSW Premier Dominic Perrottet was one of the first visitors to use the special headset, becoming totally absorbed by the video and audio presentation, which can be linked and synchronised through 50 headsets.

The VR program includes interviews with veterans, whose memories of fighting the Japanese invading force remain sharp and vivid, eight decades after they slogged through mud, battled disease and injury, and inflicted a major defeat on the enemy. Reg Chard and Lloyd Birdsall have given first-hand accounts of arriving as fresh recruits in Port Moresby and how they became hardened soldiers facing the daunting challenges of the Owen Stanley Range. Students will be fitted with individual viewing and listening headsets, and for 20 minutes will be mesmerised as they share the stories of our Kokoda veterans, gaining an

insight into, and even sharing, the difficulties and dangers of the Kokoda Track.

Students will also be supplied with special tablet devices, which they can use as they are guided from station to station along the Walkway itself. The tablets are programmed with an interactive Augmented Reality application, which will activate an experience that includes models of key equipment, archival photographs and further information.

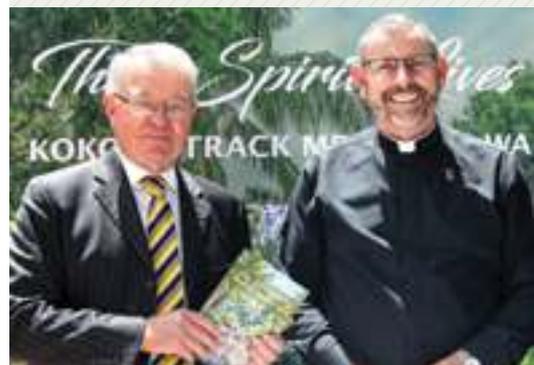
At each station students will be able to zoom in on various elements and walk into featured aspects, such as huts, medical tents and bunkers. Using the tablet device, students will be able to imagine walking around equipment, creating an intimate and interactive experience.

Funded by the Federal Department of Veterans' Affairs, the VR and AR programs are designed to provide students with a stimulating, advanced experience adding great value to what is already a wonderful educational visit.



PREMIER DOMINIC PERROTTET WEARING VR HEADSET

## THEIR SPIRIT LIVES ON



AUTHOR JOHN GATFIELD AND CHAPLAIN FR GRAEME MALONE AT THE LAUNCHING OF THE HISTORY BOOK

So much has happened at the Kokoda Track Memorial Walkway over the past 25 years, indeed so much has been achieved and so many people have contributed, that it seemed appropriate that we should record it all in a book. And when it came to a title for that book, "Their Spirit Lives On" was chosen as a tribute not only to the troops and their Papuan comrades who fought in the Kokoda campaign, but also to those who had the vision, the drive and the dedication to establish the Walkway as a living memorial and vibrant educational facility.

It took more than a year to produce the book, which we launched on Kokoda Day, starting with boxes containing many hundreds of photographs, minutes of committee meetings, correspondence, magazine cuttings and commemorative service programs. We finished with a book of 152 pages, with more than 130 photographs, putting this memorial in the context of WWII, explaining why each of the 22 stations was chosen, recording individual stories, and recalling the significant events and personalities featuring over 25 years.

On Kokoda Day it was gratifying to see how many family members appreciated the book with its many photographs of veterans who had served as guides or taken part in functions, their numbers sadly now very much diminished.

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## NEW OFFICE

We now have a new administrative office within the Ralph Honner Education Centre. This provides much-needed working space for Alice Kang and newly recruited staff member Karen Camage as they handle correspondence, enquiries, bookings for school visits and operation matters of the Memorial. The office also features a large video screen allowing constant monitoring of the upgraded system of security cameras along the walkway. The office has a mobile number 0488 488 297 and is manned Monday-Friday 10 am – 2 pm.

## THEIR SPIRIT LIVES ON CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3



*"Their Spirit Lives On"* could not have been written without assistance and advice from Alice Kang, who together with Peter Woods has been on the original steering committee or its successor, the KTMW Board, for the full 25 years.

We hope the book will give readers a full appreciation of how the Kokoda Track Memorial Walkway has flourished in its first 25 years.

- JOHN GATFIELD

Copies of the book may be purchased for \$30.

Email [alice.kang@kokodawalkway.com.au](mailto:alice.kang@kokodawalkway.com.au) or call the office on 0488 488 297. Books can be posted but if possible it would be best to pick them up from the office Monday-Friday 10.00 am – 2.00 pm



## DONATION TO KOKODA TRACK MEMORIAL WALKWAY

TITLE	FIRST NAME	INITIAL	LAST NAME		
COMPANY			POSITION IF APPLICABLE		
ADDRESS		STATE	POSTCODE	COUNTRY	
PHONE	EMAIL				

DONATION AMOUNT

\$  ,   .

All donations are tax deductible.

### PAYMENT DETAILS

Please attach a cheque made out to "Kokoda Track Memorial Walkway" or complete the credit card details below. The form and cheque should be mailed to: Alice Kang, Kokoda Track Memorial Walkway, PO Box 127, Concord NSW 2137 or emailed to [Alice.kang@kokodawalkway.com.au](mailto:Alice.kang@kokodawalkway.com.au)

NAME ON CARD:

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Kokoda Track Memorial Walkway is grateful for your donation and undertakes NOT to disclose your contact details to any other organisation.