

Governor-General's Address/video message for the Kokoda Track Memorial Walkway
25th Anniversary Event: 3 November 2021

It is a privilege for me to be with you on Kokoda Day and to be part of the Kokoda Track Memorial Walkway 25th Anniversary Event. Linda and I have been regular visitors to the Walkway over the years and have had the privilege of both attending and presiding over many significant commemorative events.

I want to acknowledge the families and colleagues of the brave men we are honouring today – the more than 600 Australian soldiers who were killed and the 1600 who were wounded in the battles along the Kokoda Track. More Australians died in the seven months of fighting in the former Papua than in any other campaign.

We remember them. We honour them. And we acknowledge the outstanding work of those involved in the Kokoda Track Memorial Walkway in preserving their memory and ensuring future generations can learn about their sacrifice for our nation.

The Memorial Walkway, in its dual role as a memorial and as a means of education for younger generations, is a place to reflect on the losses that were experienced in the Kokoda campaign and to better comprehend the heroic deeds, the sacrifice and the importance of the ultimate victory.

It also serves as a bridge to understanding and appreciating the service of our modern veterans and men and women in uniform. Today's service men and women carry forward the Anzac legacy – reflecting it and building on it through their own service in the same way that their forebears at Kokoda did. All Australians are proud of those who serve our nation.

This audience knows that the sacrifices of our service men and women are also the sacrifices of their families. In remembering and honouring those that served in the campaign we also acknowledge the impact on their loved ones, their mates and, for some, those that were left behind.

For a quarter of a century the Kokoda Track Memorial Walkway has been a place of reflection, learning and remembrance in honour of those who fought for Australia during World War II.

In closing, I would like to acknowledge a few groups and individuals:

- The boards of directors, and the chairs – Rusty Priest AM, John Haines AM and Jennifer Collins – for their leadership
- The veterans – who built and who have since beautifully maintained the Memorial Walkway
- The Veteran Guides who tell the stories of their service, and of the Kokoda campaign, to the 4,500 school students who attend the Walkway each year.

Thank you, all.

The Kokoda Track Memorial Walkway is the very embodiment of 'Lest We Forget'.

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