



# KOKODATRACK

JUNE 2024

MEMORIAL WALKWAY NEWS

## ANZAC SERVICE REACHES NEW HEIGHTS



“ It’s always humbling when people tell you this was the best service yet. ”



Those were the thoughts of KTMW Board member Alice Kang after the 2024 ANZAC commemorative service on Saturday 20 April.

More than 350 people attended to hear the addresses by guest speaker RAN Captain Richard Brickacek and Assistant Minister for Defence and Veterans’ Affairs, Matt Thistlethwaite MP. KTMW Chair Jennifer Collins AM welcomed everyone to the service; Cr Michael Megna, Mayor of City of Canada Bay, delivered the Requiem; NSW Veterans Minister David Harris MP read from the Scripture; and board member Charlie Lynn OAM

provided the thank you to all those who had contributed.

Among other guests were NSW MPs Donna Davis, Stephanie Di Pasqua and Matt Cross, Federal MP Sally Sitou, NSW Police Commissioner Karen Webb, Lt Col Paul King representing New Zealand, Air Commodore Steve Pesce AM, and diplomatic representatives from the United Kingdom, Papua New Guinea and Turkey. World War II veterans Bruce Robertson, David Trist and Reg Chard laid wreaths, and were joined by Len Sicard who served as a Warrant Officer with the RAAF.

This year’s service had a naval theme, with the video reflection emphasising the way in which the troops landing under fire at Gallipoli in 1915 had embarked on Royal Navy vessels and were then rowed ashore. The reflection was accompanied by soloist Mark Pentecost, while the Naval Hymn and the Naval Psalm formed part of the service.

Music was provided by the Corrective Services NSW band, the Strathfield North Public School choir, and the Te Wairua Tapu church choir.



# ANZAC DAY IS A TESTAMENT TO FREEDOM AND OPPORTUNITY



RAN CAPTAIN RICHARD BRICKACEK

In a powerful and, at times, emotional ANZAC address, RAN Captain Richard Brickacek CSC DSM described how, during his deployment to Afghanistan, the limits of his courage and resolve had been tested and how he had lost two comrades killed alongside him.

“My journey begins with my parents, who made the courageous decision to leave behind the oppressive regime of communist Czechoslovakia in search of freedom and opportunity in the 1960s,” he said.

“Growing up in the shadow of their struggles and triumphs, I was instilled with a deep sense of patriotism and appreciation for the values that Australia stood for.”

After joining the Navy and qualifying as a clearance diver, Captain Brickacek was deployed to Iraq in 2006 onboard HMAS Warramunga, and in 2010 to Afghanistan as an explosive ordnance disposal technician with 6RAR.

“Our mission was clear: to provide support and mentorship to the 4th Brigade of the Afghan National Army in some of the most remote and dangerous regions of Uruzgan Province, Tangi Valley, Miribad Valley, and

Kandahar Province. For nine long months, we operated outside the wire, facing danger at every turn, yet driven by a sense of duty and camaraderie that bound us together as brothers-in-arms.

“Our efforts undoubtedly contributed to making significant strides in stabilizing the region and strengthening the capabilities of the ANA. Personally, I disarmed and dealt with over 40 IEDs by hand, some whilst being shot at.”

Captain Brickacek then recalled the events of 20 August 2010 when an IED detonated during an operation in the Baluchi valley.

“I was picked up and thrown toward my Bushmaster and in that moment, as I lay wounded and disoriented amidst the chaos and carnage, I came face to face with the harsh reality of war. That IED claimed the lives of two brave soldiers – Private Grant Kirby and Private Tomas Dale.

“As the dust settled, I saw the remnants of IED componentry, and I knew immediately what had happened. I will never forget the feeling of that realization, and it still haunts me to this day. As an EOD technician and team leader you must be the first to the site for an IED detonation that involves casualties as the standard enemy procedure is to lay a secondary device around the main IED to take out those trying to help.

“My emergency procedure was to make the best speed to casualties, manage them, and clear a sufficient area that was not in the line of fire if under attack and then triage the wounded in a safe space. I had done this on multiple other occasions throughout the deployment. I had no time to grieve.

We had as a team to carry on and make sure we were all ok before reclaiming the ground we occupied. I had witnessed firsthand the ultimate sacrifice demanded by service to our nation.

“The loss of Private Kirby and Private Dale was a staggering blow, a profound reminder of the price of freedom and the fragility of life. Their courage and sacrifice will forever be etched in my memory, a testament to the selflessness and heroism of our ADF personnel.

“Their deaths also served as a powerful catalyst for reflection – a reminder of the immense responsibility entrusted to us as a military, and the profound impact our actions can have on those around us. In the face of such loss, I was filled with an overwhelming sense of admiration for the heroes who make ANZAC Day so special – the men and women who have laid down their lives in defense of our freedom.

“ANZAC Day, for me, is not merely a day of remembrance, but a sacred tribute to the bravery and sacrifice of those who have gone before us. It is a day to honor the memory of the fallen, to pay homage to their courage and resilience in the face of adversity.

“But above all, ANZAC Day is a testament to the freedom and opportunity that Australia provides to all its citizens. It is a freedom that has been secured through the blood, sweat, and tears of countless men and women who have served our country with honor and distinction.”







# MINISTER PRAISES "INSPIRATIONAL" MEMORIAL

The Assistant Minister for Defence and Veterans' Affairs, the Hon. Matt Thistlethwaite MP, reflected on his visit to the Kokoda Track in November 2023. He recalled visiting Kokoda and Isurava, and the Kingsbury Rock, where Pte Bruce Kingsbury VC had been killed by a sniper.

"That visit brought home to me, not only the staggering adversity faced by our Australian troops, but also the strength of the Australian spirit to endure, and their courage and sacrifice in defending Australia during that conflict," said Mr Thistlethwaite.

"The deeds of the Australian troops in Papua and New Guinea built on the legacy of Anzac that we so respect and revere.

"Today we gather on the grounds of an inspirational community project, dedicated to the memory of those who served, a solemn tribute to their service and to that Anzac legacy.

"Combining the best of Australian commemoration the Kokoda Track Memorial Walkway is a living, growing memorial, an educational resource that forms a link with the past for today's and future generations. It's a place where, just as we do today, those generations will come to learn and to pay their respects - the respect that is due those who served our nation in its darkest hour."

The Minister said ANZAC Day remains core to our national identity.



MATT THISTLETHWAITE MP

"I thank the KTMW and your board for your moving tribute to the men who fought and died, the locals who supported them, and the families who mourn them. But most importantly for renewing the sacred covenant that those who served and their lives shall never be forgotten."

## VISITORS FROM PNG



Significant visitors from Papua New Guinea were MPs, the Hon. Powes Parkop, Governor of the National Capital District Commission, and the Hon. Isi Leonard, Minister for Tourism, Arts & Culture.

KTMW chair Jennifer Collins AM and board member Charlie Lynn OAM guided the visitors through the virtual reality experience in the education centre, and along the walkway to the Memorial Centrepiece, where the group laid wreaths.

## FIVE DOCK RSL VISITS



Five Dock RSL sub-Branch veterans visited on Sunday 19 May for their wellness day. They heard from the Chair Jennifer Collins AM about the Kokoda Track Memorial Walkway and were thanked for their annual significant donations. For many it was their first visit. They all were positive about the visit.

## BANK MANAGERS LEND A HAND

Commonwealth Bank branch managers from Sydney's inner west volunteered for a day's labour at the Walkway, working hard to keep the memorial looking its best. In particular they gave the memorial rose garden a facelift, making sure the roses were tidy and the plaques polished.

Board member Alice Kang gave them an overview of the KTMW history and led them through the virtual reality technology. They viewed the memorial stations along the walkway and concluded their visit with a wreath laying ceremony at the Memorial Centrepiece.



# SERIES OF TALKS BRING MILITARY HISTORY TO LIFE

Our "Beyond the Battlefield" series of talks continued in early April with John Tannock's presentation on the battle of Oivi-Gorari between 4 and 11 November 1942. Gorari has been recognised as one of the most significant battles of the Pacific campaign: 133 Australians were killed and 225 wounded, while Japanese casualties numbered around 1000 and their forces were left in disarray.

John Tannock's father was wounded in the battle and John has been instrumental in having a monument erected at Gorari village, bearing the names of those Australians who died.

The series continues as follows, all talks scheduled for Saturdays at 10.30 am:



## 15 JUNE

"War Crime or Legitimate Act of War?" Dr Jan McLeod on the 1942 Japanese bombing of Allied medical establishments at Soputa

## 10 AUGUST

"Forgotten Facts: obscure wartime anecdotes." John Hall relates unusual and forgotten incidents from WWII

## 12 OCTOBER

"The German U-Boat campaign against Australia 1944-45." Dr David Stevens recounts the voyage of U-862 and its wily commander Heinrich Timm

## 30 NOVEMBER

"White man's war: Papuan and New Guinean experiences of WWII." Dr Seamus Spark goes beyond the usual story of supposedly willing and compliant Fuzzy Wuzzy Angels



◀ NSW Veterans Minister David Harris with members of the Sydney Swifts netball team players and coaches at the commemorative service



## REMEDIAL WORK ON CENTREPIECE

After more than 25 years of exposure to the weather, the Memorial Centrepiece was starting to show signs of wear and tear. A team of specialists was called in to replace some of the tiles on the sandblasted photographic images on the wall. Some of the pavers were also replaced as they had become cracked. The repairs were completed in advance of the ANZAC commemoration, ensuring that the Centrepiece remains the spiritual heart of the Memorial Walkway.

