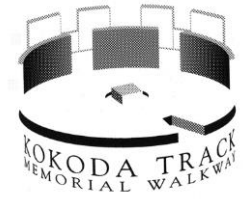


# THE KOKODA TRACK MEMORIAL WALKWAY – THE MANY REASONS TO VISIT



## Overview

The Kokoda Track Memorial Walkway, nestled along the foreshore of Brays Bay, stands as one of the City of Canada Bay's most cherished community landmarks. More than a scenic path, it is a living tribute that draws residents, families, veterans, school groups, and visitors together in shared remembrance and reflection.

## Connectedness

The Walkway serves as a natural gathering point for the wider community. Each year it welcomes thousands of visitors, from elderly veterans and their families honouring fallen veterans, to young students discovering Australia's wartime heritage for the first time. This intergenerational exchange of memory and meaning promotes community connection and fosters empathy across generations.

## Engaging Students: Courage, Endurance, Sacrifice and Mateship

One of the Walkway's most important roles is as a living classroom for young Australians. School groups from across Sydney and NSW visit the site as part of an excursion that goes beyond a walk along the foreshore. The Walkway turns history into a hands-on encounter with values that remain relevant today.

Led by our Volunteer Guides, students engage with the four core values or pillars that define the Kokoda campaign:

- **Courage** — Through storytelling and guided discussion, students understand the physical and moral courage shown by the Australian soldiers. Veteran accounts embedded in the video presentation give courage a human face and a local name.
- **Endurance** – Images and descriptions of the physical conditions that Australian soldiers faced, including the treacherous terrain, extreme weather and tropical diseases they confronted, will illustrate to the students the strength and spirit that was so proudly on display during the Kokoda Track campaign and beyond
- **Sacrifice** — Age-appropriate discussions help students grasp the personal cost borne by the soldiers — many of whom were teenagers or young men only a few years older than themselves. The Honour Roll and plaques in the Memorial Rose Garden give sacrifice a name, a face, and a story that students carry beyond the visit.

- **Mateship** — Students will learn of the unbreakable bond of loyalty, trust, and unconditional support forged among Australian soldiers, as well as highlighting the important role of the “Fuzzy Wuzzy Angels” during the Kokoda Campaign. The strong connection between the Australians and their Papuan allies, as well as between those Australians who experienced the campaign, under extreme hardship is a cornerstone of the learning experience

These visits are carefully designed to be age-appropriate and aligned to learning areas across both primary (Year 5 and 6) and secondary levels. Teachers consistently report that they and their students leave with a deeper understanding of Australia's wartime history.

***School groups are invited to participate in a commemorative wreath laying and a walk along the stations of the Walkway – transforming the visit into a valuable education and community experience.***

## **Local Community Groups: An Inclusive Welcome for All**

The Walkway's power as a community connector extends well beyond school excursions. The Walkway actively welcomes a rich diversity of local community groups, with each finding their own meaningful connection to this shared space. The Ralph Honner Education Centre is a spacious and fully-equipped centre where all are welcome.

**Aged & Seniors Groups:** Wheelchair-accessible paths, shaded seating and paved surfaces ensure full access. Many older visitors share personal wartime memories of their fathers, uncles or grandfathers being on the Kokoda Track or in other wartime campaigns and share with our volunteer guides how this affected them.

**Disability Support Groups:** The physical accessibility of the Walkway makes the site genuinely inclusive for visitors of all abilities. The site models inclusive public space design, affirming that remembrance belongs to everyone.

**Multicultural & Ethnic Community Groups:** Guided tours welcome new Australians into sharing our heritage. This builds cultural understanding and broadens community ownership of Australian history across diverse backgrounds.

**Professional & Corporate Groups:** The Walkway offers an opportunity for corporate teams to engage in meaningful volunteer work while fostering teamwork and camaraderie. This strengthens community engagement and often leads to ongoing corporate volunteer support.

Each group that visits enriches the Walkway's story and deepens its community roots. Coordinated visit programs — including tailored guided tours, accessible pathways, different types of community groups — ensure that no community member is left behind. The Walkway's team actively reaches out to aged care facilities, disability support services, multicultural community groups, and local businesses to extend open invitations, ensuring the site's story belongs to everyone.

## **Volunteer Initiatives & Partnerships**

The Walkway's ongoing vitality is made possible through the sustained dedication of a team of volunteers and a broad network of community partnerships. The City of Canada Bay Council, local RSL Sub-Branches, schools and community organisations collaborate to maintain the site, organise commemorative events — particularly around ANZAC Day and Kokoda Day — and deliver educational programs. These volunteer-driven efforts reflect civic pride and demonstrate a sustained commitment to community participation.

## **Creative Engagement**

The Walkway engages the community through stations along the Walkway that provide information on a location or battle point along the Kokoda Track. QR codes on each allow the public to further explore online the details and importance of that station in the Kokoda Campaign.

Commemorative ceremonies incorporate music, readings, and community participation, transforming remembrance into an active, inclusive event rather than a passive one. These creative elements ensure the site remains emotionally resonant and accessible to diverse audiences.

School groups engage with our technology, including virtual reality experiences that tell the stories of our veterans. The Walkway continues to innovate and take advantage of technology advances that benefit our visitor's experience.

Community artists and groups have contributed installation elements that honour the campaign while speaking to contemporary audiences. Each ANZAC Day, Victory in the Pacific Day and Kokoda Day commemoration service is shaped with community input, ensuring the voices of our youth and local residents — not just officials — are heard and celebrated.

## **Innovation & Sustainable Practices**

The vegetation of the Walkway, particularly around the Memorial Centrepiece and the creek, reflects the rainforest terrain of Papua New Guinea and any additions are kept within this framework.

Improvements to accessibility ensure the space remains welcoming to people of all abilities.

## **Innovative initiatives include:**

- School groups and the use of technology to enhance their experience;
- Guided tour resources supporting multicultural visitors;
- Sensory-friendly signage and pathway design for visitors with disabilities;
- Enhanced BBQ facilities with covered seating and utilities that encourage everyday community gatherings, picnics, and family visits — extending the site's value as a year-round community space; and
- Community-led maintenance working bees that build social bonds while caring for the site.

## **Conclusion**

The Kokoda Track Memorial Walkway brings people together in remembrance, learning, and pride; it is sustained by volunteer dedication and community partnership; and it continues to innovate in how it engages and includes all members of the community.

From the school student who leaves with a new understanding of courage and mateship, to the aged care resident who finds their memories honoured and their stories valued, to the newly arrived Australian who discovers a shared national heritage - the Walkway speaks to everyone. It is a place where sacrifice is remembered, service is modelled, and community is made stronger.