



MINISTER FOR VETERANS' AFFAIRS

SENATOR THE HON. MICHAEL RONALDSON
MINISTER FOR VETERANS' AFFAIRS
MINISTER ASSISTING THE PRIME MINISTER FOR THE CENTENARY OF ANZAC
SPECIAL MINISTER OF STATE

BALLARAT TO HOST NATIONAL SECOND WORLD WAR COMMEMORATIVE EVENTS

Ballarat will host two major commemorative events as part of the Australian Government's Centenary of Anzac Program with Minister for Veterans' Affairs and Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Centenary of Anzac, Senator the Hon Michael Ronaldson, today revealing that Ballarat would share in \$8.8 million allocated to support domestic events.

Senator Ronaldson, who is also the Patron Senator for Ballarat, said major Australian commemorations marking the 75th anniversaries of the Fall of Singapore and the completion of the Thai-Burma Railway would be held at the Australian Ex-Prisoner of War Memorial in Ballarat.

"Approximately 30,000 Australians were captured as prisoners of war during the Second World War with about 14,000 of these being captured by Japanese forces at the Fall of Singapore in February 1942," Senator Ronaldson said.

"Many of these POWs were held in the Changi internee camps, and the Changi Gaol. From these camps, some 13,000 Australian POWs were transferred to work on the notorious Thai-Burma railway, an infamous construction project that became known as the Death Railway due to the brutal conditions faced by workers.

"Before the 415km railway was finished in October 1943, an estimated 2,700 Australian POWs died as a result of working on the railway.

Senator Ronaldson said Ballarat's Ex-Prisoner of War Memorial recognised the deprivation and the hardships faced by all POWs and was an appropriate place for the nation to reflect on the 75th anniversaries of the Fall of Singapore and the completion of the Thai-Burma Railway. *Veterans and Veterans Families Counselling Service (VVCS) and Veterans Line can be reached 24 hours a day across Australia for crisis support and free and confidential counselling. Phone 1800 011 046 (international: +61 8 8241 4546)*

"This memorial is a poignant tribute and a reminder of all the 34,000 Australians who have been held as POWs including the 8,400 who died and are buried overseas," Senator Ronaldson said.

"I am honoured to announce that this memorial will host the commemorations of two of our nation's most significant POW-related anniversaries as part of the Government's Centenary of Anzac Programme.

"During the Centenary of Anzac period (2014–2018), we not only commemorate those who served in the First World War, but also those who have served our nation in all subsequent conflicts and peacekeeping operations over the last 100 years. Remembering the service and sacrifice of those who were detained as POWs, those who died in these camps and acknowledging the effects this had on their family and loved ones is an important part of this commemorative period," Senator Ronaldson said.

The \$8.8 million funding allocated to commemorate domestic events will be included in next week's Federal Budget as part of the Australian Government's commitment of a further \$35.5 million for commemorative events relating to a Century of Service.

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Department of Veterans'

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