Australian War Memorial supports WA in First World War centenary projects

The Australian War Memorial has announced a range of major projects to mark the centenary of the First World War, which was declared 100 years ago on 4 August 1914.

In Perth on the eve of the centenary, the Memorial’s Director, Dr Brendan Nelson, said many of the Memorial’s centenary projects reached out to communities throughout Western Australia and the whole nation.

“To commemorate the First World War centenary, the Memorial has developed a broad range of exhibitions, programs and activities to allow all Australians access to and gain an understanding of the Anzac legend that was forged during this period,” Dr Nelson said.

“While the Memorial is a great distance from Western Australia geographically, it is closely linked with those of the 32,231 servicemen and servicewomen who enlisted in this state and didn’t come home.”

Dr Nelson was joined at the State War Memorial today by the Hon Graham Edwards, President of the RSL in Western Australia, Vietnam War veteran and a member of the Australian War Memorial’s Council.

Dr Nelson said a new travelling exhibition, A camera on Gallipoli, showcasing the collection of photographs taken by Dr Charles Ryan who was a surgeon on Gallipoli, would tour to 30 locations around the nation, including four in Western Australia — Albany, Geraldton, Fremantle and Kalgoorlie.

“This exhibition, touring Western Australia from March next year, can also be seen in more rural and remote areas by organisations applying to the Memorial for a digital version,” he said.

“As well, Western Australian school children have participated in the Memorial’s Commemorative Crosses project, in which young people write their personal messages of thanks and hope on 100,000 small wooden crosses. These will be taken overseas and laid on the graves of Australian servicemen and servicewomen at sites around the world.

“There is significant ongoing interest in the Commemorative Crosses project from various Western Australian schools and organisations, including the Army Museum of Western Australia and the RSL.”

Dr Nelson said the Memorial’s Last Post Ceremony on Monday would be a significant one, in which two Western Australian school children would participate.

“Brock Larkan and Alika Gould, who are both 11 years old and attend the Dale Christian School in Armadale, will lay a wreath at this national ceremony, along with two school students from each state,” he said.
“I urge all Western Australians to join in this commemoration by watching the Last Post ceremony, which is streamed live from the Memorial’s website, www.awm.gov.au, and telecast live on ABC24.”

Dr Nelson said the Western Australians who served and died in the First World War would be honoured through two projects to be launched at the Memorial as part of the centenary commemorations.

“Through the Memorial’s Roll of Honour Soundscape Project, the names and ages of each Australian who died will be played in the cloisters along the First World War Roll of Honour,” Dr Nelson said.

“The recordings were made by students from around the country, including students from 12 Western Australian schools. ABC studios in Perth, Albany, Bunbury, Geraldton and Kalgoorlie recorded their voices on behalf of the Memorial.

“And, from next Monday, the names on the First World War Roll of Honour will be projected on to the exterior of the Hall of Memory each night over the four years of the centenary. Western Australians with family who died in the First World War can find out when their names will be projected by searching their names on the Memorial’s website.

“Anzac connections is another centenary project that makes the personal papers of servicemen and servicewomen available for anyone to view. They are being digitised and made available on the Memorial’s website.”

Dr Nelson said the significance of the first contingent of the Australian troops who left from Albany on 1 November 1914 was recognised by the Memorial, which was loaning a number of significant items to the new National Anzac Centre in Albany.

Works of art and photographs are also being loaned to a range of Federal and State Government parliamentary offices to promote awareness of the centenary. Other pieces are going to the Australian National Maritime Museum for a major travelling exhibition, and the Memorial will hold a major conference, Gallipoli 1915: a century on, next year.

He said a major centenary project at the Memorial was the complete redevelopment of the First World War Galleries, scheduled for completion in November 2014. In February 2015, the multi-million-dollar Australia in the Great War exhibition would open in this outstanding new space.

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