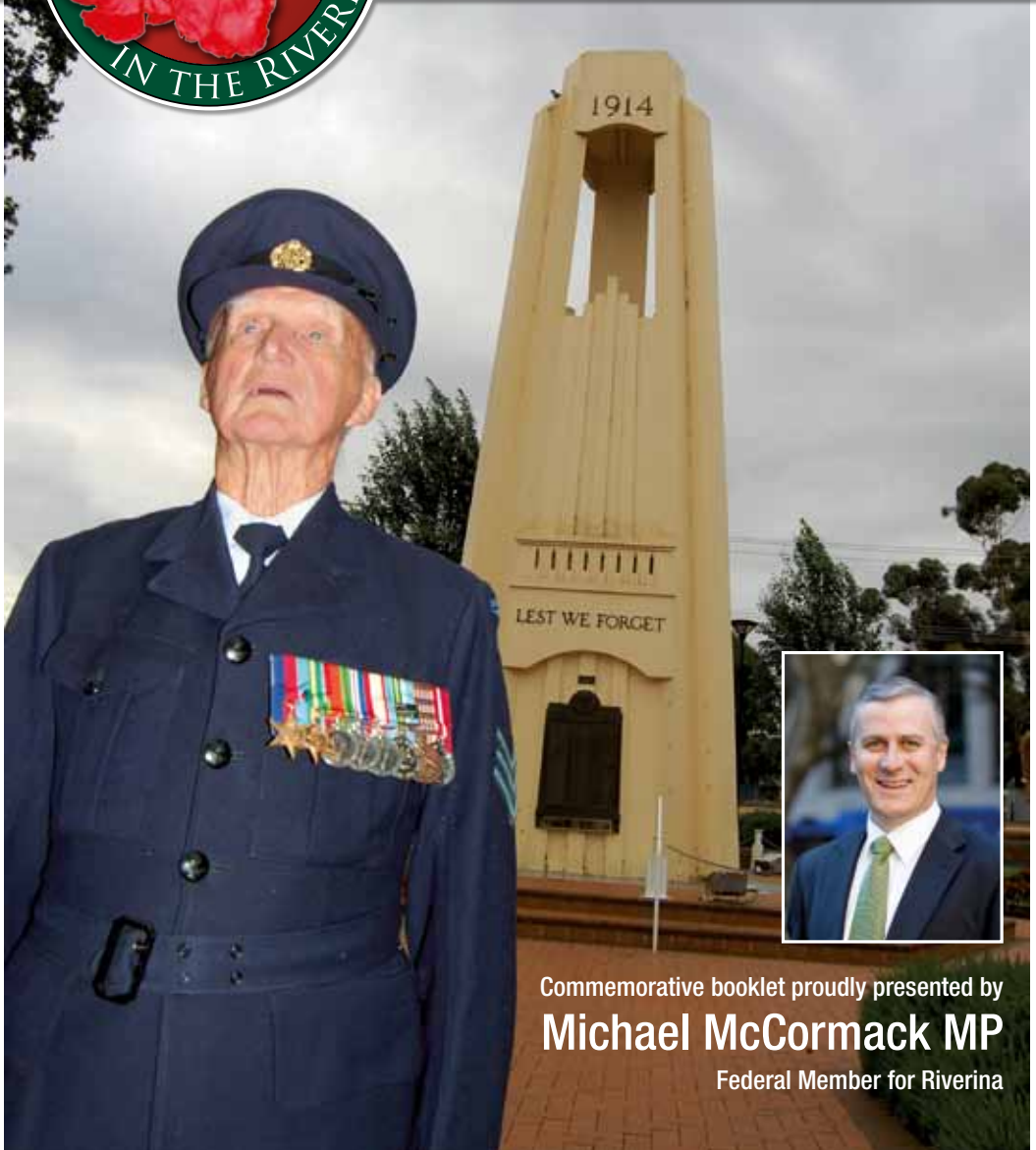




25TH APRIL 2011



Commemorative booklet proudly presented by

**Michael McCormack MP**

Federal Member for Riverina



## MIA BATTLES ENDURE

HAVING spilled their blood to win peace in The Great War, Australian soldiers then spilled their sweat to forge the mighty Murrumbidgee Irrigation Area.

These hardy souls were true national heroes.

They volunteered fervently and fearlessly to fight the good fight in far away Europe when the call came to serve God, King and country.

Those fortunate to escape with their lives then enthusiastically and dauntlessly took up the Commonwealth's offer of soldier settlement blocks in the newly-formed irrigation districts.

These were the toughest of times. Harsh weather. An unforgiving landscape. These men had been through a lot and were about to endure plenty more hardships.

Despite all the barriers put in their way and the enormity of the task confronting them, these plucky Veterans did what Diggers do... they rolled up their sleeves, flexed their muscles and performed the duty their nation asked of them.

Their toil forged a new beginning for themselves and their newly adopted region of this wide brown land.

They transformed semi-arid plains into a green, thriving food bowl and fibre-producing district.

Their worth to Australia's economic growth can never be underestimated.

Their zeal to do the back-breaking work to open up new territory can never be given enough praise.

Their willingness to live alongside and in harmony with immigrants ensured the MIA was the cradle of multiculturalism.

The contribution of our soldier forebears must now be repaid by the Commonwealth through sensible outcomes in the present water debate.

Let not their selfless determination in war against the enemies of democracy and then against the vagaries of nature and the harsh environment into which they were thrust, be in vain.

Let us now, more than ever, remember and honour them for what they did so that we may live in peace and that we have food on our tables into a prosperous future.

Lest we forget.

*Michael McCormack*

MICHAEL McCORMACK MP  
Federal Member for Riverina



## CARRATHOOL'S ANZAC HERO

*"THE price of freedom is the lives of heroes."*

So says the plaque on the Carrathool War Memorial (above).

By anyone's reckoning Arthur James Ledwidge was a hero.

This Carrathool labourer was killed in action at Gallipoli on 28 April 1915 – just the fourth day of the epic campaign which created the ANZAC legend.

Private Ledwidge was 6 feet 1 inch (185 centimetres) tall, lean and 21 years of age when he enlisted at Liverpool on 16 November 1914.

He sailed with the 13th Battalion out of Melbourne on HMAT Ulysses, never to return.

The brave son of Michael and Rose was buried on the hill to the right of the landing place at Gaba Tepe.



## GALLIPOLI CONTINUES TO INSPIRE

GALLIPOLI was the largest amphibious invasion in history and although the 1915 campaign was ultimately unsuccessful, the powerful legacy created by the Australian and New Zealand Army Corps (ANZACs) forms the ethos of all who proudly wear our military uniform today.

Inspirational stories from Gallipoli are part of our national folklore: the original 25 April landings (pictured), Jack Simpson who saved so many of the wounded with his famous donkey and the Battle of Lone Pine.

But the common thread which so tightly bound all who served on that treacherous Turkish peninsula was mateship and Gallipoli, more than anything else, stirred strong feelings of patriotism and helped forge a young nation which had celebrated Federation only a little more than a decade earlier.

Of the 61,522 Australians who lost their lives in World War I, 8709 were killed in action or died of disease or wounds at Gallipoli.

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*STILL SERVING: Roy Stacy shown here during his war years and (right) today.*



## A NOBLE HERITAGE

WHEN the Murrumbidgee Irrigation Area was in its infancy, soldier settlers from World War I were sent to help kick-start the region.

Eventually, 2000 Great War and five Boer War Veterans took up Federal and State Government incentives to move to the Griffith district.

During the terrible years of hardship and rationing in World War II (1939-45), a remarkable 93 per cent of those WWI pioneering irrigators who made Griffith home were still carrying out the essential role of growing food to feed the nation.

No less than 960 sons of those soldier settlers signed up for duty in WWII, the highest enlistment ratio per capita for any place in Australia.

About a dozen of Griffith's WWI Veterans backed up again to fight in WWII.

The Women's Land Army kept Australian farms going during WWII.

Thirty-one Land Army members married Griffith locals, providing the MIA with another indelible agricultural-military link – a heritage of which the now thriving city is justifiably proud.

# AGE SHALL NOT WEARY ROY



IT WILL be 64 years on 30 June since Herbert Fitzroy (Roy) Stacy officially ended his time in the nation's military with the rank of Sergeant.

Unofficially, however, Roy has continued to serve and his work will keep Griffith's wartime spirit alive for generations to follow.

Hale and hearty at age 90, Roy still easily fits into his World War II uniform – as he shows in our cover picture taken in front of the magnificent War Memorial in Banna Avenue.

Roy is very much looking forward to marching with his 16-year-old granddaughter Jessica In'thout, a member of the Geelong Air Cadets, in Griffith on ANZAC Day.

He might not be the dapper and dashing young airman he once was but there is still a sparkle in Roy's blue eyes, especially when he talks of his almost seven years with the Royal Australian Air Force.

*"They were tough yet exciting years,"* Roy reminisced as he gazed around the Griffith War Memorial Hall Museum, a place he helped establish to ensure the city's efforts in the pursuit of peace are always respected and remembered.

*"You made plenty of mates ... you lost many mates too."*

After the war Roy returned to Griffith to marry (to Nancy), raise a family and live a long and happy life.

*"Sadly, there were 106 from here who paid the supreme sacrifice,"* Roy said.

Born at Beelbanga on 27 November 1920, Roy signed on in Sydney on 26 August 1940 and trained at Richmond and Point Cook before being posted to Darwin for two years.

He then spent three years at No. 2 Aircraft Depot Richmond with the important responsibility of the assembly of all manner of armament (bombs and guns) on a variety of aircraft including the Beaufighter, Kittyhawk, Lancaster Bomber, Mustang and Spitfire.

At war's end Roy went to Bofu, Japan, until 1947 with the British Commonwealth Occupation Force with 81 Fighter Wing comprising 76, 77, 82 Squadron flying Mustang aircraft.

Roy's biggest challenge awaited.

As treasurer of the Griffith Returned and Services League Sub-Branch since 2003 and secretary since 2008, Roy was a naturally a willing volunteer for a committee to research, compile and collate name lists for honour rolls to be erected near the Griffith Cenotaph.

It became a labour of love and now the eight marble monuments containing 3400 names of local servicemen and women stand as a magnificent legacy to not only Griffith's outstanding contribution to the country, but also that of Roy Stacy.

*(Above left) FIGHTER PLANE: A Mustang Roy Stacy was in charge of working on in Bofu, Japan, in 1946.*

*(Right) COME JOIN US: Recruitment poster in the Griffith War Memorial Hall Museum.*





*(Left) REMEMBERED: Australian and a commemorative Lest We Forget flags fly solemnly under a leaden sky at Leeton where Sister Verdun Sheah is honoured on the Memorial Clock Tower.*

*(Below left) HONOURED: Sister Verdun Sheah is remembered on the World War II Monument at Narrandera.*

## MUCH-LOVED LOCAL NURSE'S FINAL FLIGHT

SISTER Verdun Sheah of Leeton lost her life after World War II had ended but is regarded as a military heroine nonetheless.

Her death and those of the other 27 on board a Royal Australian Air Force transport aircraft which crashed in late 1945 cast a pall of sorrow over a nation still coming to grips with the awful devastation of six years of global conflict.

The tragedy was particularly felt at Leeton and Narrandera, where Sister Sheah was a popular and much-loved figure.

**Sister Verdun was a wonderful role model who dedicated her life to caring and supporting those in need.**

In the month leading up to her death she began having deep premonitions of her death.

Normally a reserved person, her boding feelings of dread so concerned her she raised them with a close associate from her Leeton days, then Wing Commander John Balfe.

The doomed flight on 15 November 1945 was a routine flight, a short trip from Jacquot Bay to Rabaul in New Guinea on a Douglas DC-Dakota.

These Dakota flights often conveyed wounded soldiers and ex-Prisoners and so the RAAF had a team of flying nurses – trained sisters who undertook a further specialised aviation course to gain their “wings”.

Based at Lae, in northern New Guinea, in November 1945 was No. 33 Squadron RAAF and further inland by road at Nadzab was No. 1 Medical Air Evacuation Transport Unit (MAETU) which included staff member Sister Sheah.

She was not meant to take the ill-fated flight but stood in for the rostered nurse who called in sick.

The pilot was Flight Lieutenant Ron Hanrahan, a former Woolworths’ branch manager in Sydney who had 1382 hours of flying experience but only 138 on Douglas DC-3s.

Co-pilot was Flt-Lt Grahame Lobwein who had been awarded an Air Force Cross for air-sea rescue work in the Darwin area.



Although both pilots had good flying records in other smaller aircraft, they were relatively new to Dakotas and had started flying them only four months earlier. Radio operator was Flight Sergeant Douglas Bruderlin.

Unusually, the passengers that day included 11 former Indian Army PoWs, liberated from Wewak, as well as a stowaway. Army, Air Force and Navy personnel made up the passenger list.

The plane departed pre-dawn from Lae, covering about 480 kilometres (300 miles) in two hours with two stops.

The last leg, expected to take 50 minutes, was over tiger country, with thick jungle and volcanic mountain peaks below.

Slightly to the right of the aircraft's direct track was an unnamed mountain, the peak of which is shown on modern aviation maps is being 2310 metres (7598 feet). Wartime maps had it at only 2128m (7000').

New Guinea is notorious for its rock-studded clouds.

Twenty minutes out and 50km from departure, disaster struck.

RAAF Dakota A65-54 went straight into the tree-covered mountain, killing all on board.

When the RAAF courier aircraft failed to arrive at Rabaul a search was hastily arranged.

More than the usual concern was held as this was the fourth Douglas transport to go down in as many months.

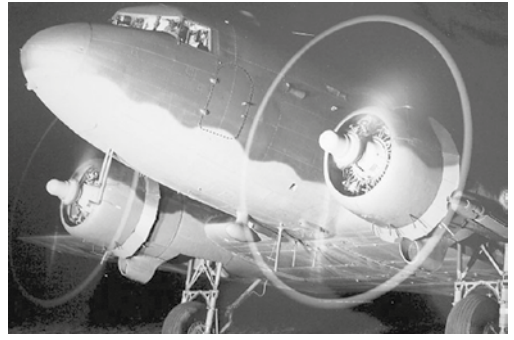
The latest missing plane was found the following day by Squadron Leader Jim Maloney, officer commanding 33 Squadron who radioed back to base that no-one could have survived the scene he had witnessed.

Wreckage was strewn over a large area.

Trees were sheared more than three metres down for 60 metres.

It was evident by the distribution of debris that the pilots had attempted a failed last-second attempt to pull the nose of the Dakota up and over the peak.

A ground party including a doctor and medical assistants was despatched to the scene but it was confirmed all were lost. After identifying the victims and recovering mail and personal items the group, crestfallen, made their way back to Jacquinot Bay.



The next day another aircraft from 33 Squadron flew over the crash site and dropped two wreaths – one for the crew and another, from the nursing sisters and made of frangipani and lilies, for Sister Sheah.

Born at Narrandera on 3 March 1916, Sister Sheah was named Verdun after the famous Great War Battle of Verdun which lasted from 21 February - 18 December 1916 between France and Germany which resulted in 306,000 battlefield deaths.

She was the third of four girls and two brothers of a mixed Chinese Australian family and completed her education at Narrandera High School.

She trained at Leeton District Hospital and continued further studies in obstetrics in Sydney before enlisting with the RAAF at Narrandera on 1 July 1942.

She was nicknamed "Chic" because of her impeccable appearance in any situation, even after alighting from a long and difficult flight.

*"She was loved by other members of the unit, and also by the patients and others with whom she worked,"* Senior Sister E C Smith said to newspapers at the time of Sister Sheah's death.

Sister Sheah had some close calls before her final flight, writing to her sister Lorraine of a flight turned back by foul weather and of another occasion when mechanical failure meant limping back to base on one engine.

In October 1945 an American bomb dump at Nadzab went up only 500 metres from Sister Sheah's campsite with blasts and shrapnel whizzing past all night.

In the same correspondence she ended with: *"cheer up, because there's always a silver lining."*

Sister Sheah was buried at Rabaul War Cemetery and is listed on the Australian War Memorial's Roll of Honour, at Westminster Abbey, London, with other Commonwealth nurses who gave their lives during wartime duty, as well as on War Memorials at Leeton and Narrandera.



*(Left) HEROINE: Sister Verdun Sheah 1916-45A Dakota*

*(Above) WARM-UP: A RAAF Douglas aircraft prepares for a pre-dawn take-off. Four such planes were lost in as many months during 1945.*



*THEN AND NOW: The impressive monument erected to commemorate Narrandera's Boer War volunteers as it was in yesteryear and as it is in 2011.*

## NARRANDERA'S BOER WAR BRAVERY

VOLUNTEERING for action in the Boer War cost three of Narrandera district's favourite sons their lives.

Among the first to sign up was John Alexander Stewart Andrew of Berembeld.

He was joined in what seemed like an adventure by Matong's Alf Dufrayer, Joe King of Narrandera and Frank Rudd of Wagingoberemby and they sailed from Sydney on 17 January 1900.

Trooper Jack Andrew, who paid his own way in the 1st Australian Horse, died at Capetown on 3 March... not long after landing.

Dufrayer was recognised for rescuing a mate under heavy fire at Prinsloo's Farm north of Bloemfontein.

Private King returned safely then left for South Africa again, was made a Sergeant and came home again.

Pte Rudd, too, was acknowledged, for good scouting during the Battle of Diamond Hill (Donkerhoek) on 11 and 12 June 1900, when 14,000 British soldiers squared up against 4000 Boers and forced them from their positions on the hill.

Narrandera also lost Tpr Patrick Verdon of the New South Wales Citizens Bushmen A Squadron who fought in the famous losing Battle of Elands River or Modderfontein on 17 September 1901, four months to the day before he died at Pretoria.

On 11 December 1901 Corporal William Smith of the 3rd NSW Imperial Bushmen succumbed to enteric fever at Middelburg.

To honour the three fallen locals and the 24 others who served, an imposing memorial obelisk was

unveiled in Narrandera by the wife of the town's Mayor Fred Smith on 17 December 1902, just over six months after a truce was declared.

South Africa was half a world away but its troubles cast a pall of gloom over Narrandera... yet nothing could prepare the district for the losses they would suffer when the world went to war just a dozen years later.



*IN THE FIELD: Volley firing by a Regiment of the NSW Imperial Bushmen near Mafeking, South Africa, during the Boer War. Most of Narrandera's 27 volunteers were in the Bushmen's contingents.*

## MERRIWAGGA GAVE MIGHTILY

FOR such a tiny place, Merriwagga certainly burdened its share of responsibility when it came to military representation in World War II and subsequent conflicts.

A unique War Memorial, featuring a unique metal Rising Sun, includes a plaque with 84 names of those from the district who served in WWII, the British Commonwealth Occupation Force in Japan, Korea and Vietnam.

Among them are Dorothy Greenwood, Hillary Higgins, Joan Hoad, Mary McIvor and Margaret Varcoe who played their part.

The local Soldiers Memorial Uniting Church honours three brave men killed in action in WWI: Melville McKenzie, Robert Moore and Joseph Varcoe.

# 2011 ANZAC DAY SERVICE TIMES AND VENUES

## CARRATHOOL

6am Dawn Service, Cenotaph in Memorial Hall grounds, Wade St.

## COLEAMBALLY

**(Includes Darlington Point)**

5.45am Dawn Service, John McInnes Sq.

2.45pm March from Community Hall.

3pm Main Service, McInnes Sq.

## GOOLGOWI

3.30pm Cenotaph outside Ex-Servicemen's Club, cnr Combo and Napier St's.

**GRIFFITH (Includes Beelbanger, Bilbul, Hanwood, Lake Wyangan, Nericon, Tharbogan)**

6am Dawn service, Memorial Gardens.

10.45am March from War Memorial Museum (Ex-RSS Hall), Banna Ave.

11am Main service, Memorial Gardens.

**HILLSTON (Includes Merriwagga and surrounding districts)**

10.30am March from Ex-Servicemen's Club, High St.

11am Service, Cenotaph in Hillston Memorial Park.

**LEETON (Includes Gogeldrie, Murrumbidgee, Stanbridge, Wamoon)**

6am Dawn Service, short march from corner Church St to Cenotaph.

10am March from Leeton Courthouse to Cenotaph.

11.15am Leeton Soldiers' Club, corner Yanco and Acacia Ave's, RSL Shrine, small service and wreath laying.

## NARRANDERA

**(Includes Grong Grong)**

6am Dawn Service.

9am Small Service, Air Force war graves.

10.30am March from Narrandera Ex-Servicemen's Club, Bolton St.

11am Main Service, Memorial Gardens.

## RANKINS SPRINGS

8am Start of March after assembling at Allan James Park. Service to follow at Cenotaph.

## WAGGA WAGGA

5.45am Dawn Service, Cenotaph in Victory Memorial Gardens, Baylis St followed by service at Wagga Wagga War Cemetery, Koorringal Rd.

10.30am Baylis St march begins.

11am Wreath laying, Victory Memorial Gardens Cenotaph.

## WHITTON

3pm Small March, Memorial Gates.

## YANCO

Noon Service, Yanco Hall.

## YENDA

5am Dawn Service.

10.30am March from Yenda Diggers' Club, East St, cnr Mirrool Ave.

10.45am Main Service, Yenda Memorial Park.

## YOOGALI

3pm Service, Memorial Plaque in park.

## CAPITAL CITY SERVICES:

### CANBERRA

5.30am Dawn service, Australian War Memorial (suggested arrival from 4.30am onwards).

6:30am Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commemorative Ceremony, Aboriginal Memorial Plaque, side of Mount Ainslie.

10.15am National ceremony, Australian War Memorial (suggested arrival 9.45am).

### SYDNEY

4:15am Dawn Service, Cenotaph in Martin Pl.

8:30am Wreath-laying ceremony at Cenotaph in Martin Pl.

9am ANZAC Day march starting at Martin Pl/George St/ Bathurst St/Hyde Park.

12:30pm Commemorative service, ANZAC Memorial, Hyde Park South.

1pm Aboriginal ANZAC Day March, Redfern.

5pm Sunset Service, Cenotaph in Martin Pl.



## BISCUITS TO KEEP 'EM SOLDIERING ON

THE famous ANZAC Biscuit came about, so legend goes, because mothers, wives and girlfriends feared their men overseas were not getting sufficient nutritional value.

Food supplies had to be shipped to Great War battle-fronts and naval transportation was slow, so a recipe was formulated for a biscuit which would last the distance and pass the taste test.

### Ingredients

- 1 cup each of plain flour, sugar, rolled oats and coconut.
- 115 grams (4 oz) butter.
- 1 tablespoon treacle (golden syrup).
- 2 tablespoons boiling water (add a little more water if mixture is too dry).
- 1 teaspoon bi-carbonate soda.

### Method

1. Grease biscuit tray and pre-heat oven to 180°C.
2. Combine dry ingredients.
3. Melt together butter and golden syrup. Combine water and bi-carbonate soda – add to butter mix.
4. Mix butter mixture and dry ingredients.
5. Drop teaspoons of mixture onto tray allowing room for spreading.

Bake for 10-15 minutes or until golden. Allow to cool on tray for a few minutes before transferring to cooling racks.

\*Makes about 35 biscuits.

*Recipe provided by Bob Lawson, an ANZAC at Gallipoli. Source: Australian War Memorial [www.awm.gov.au](http://www.awm.gov.au)*

**PLEASE NOTE:** All times and venues have been supplied in good faith by various RSL Sub-Branch officials and were correct at the time of publication. Every care has been taken to ensure as many services as possible have been included. For verification of other services please contact your local RSL Sub-Branch.



# SCHOOLCHILDREN'S THOUGHTS

RIVERINA primary and secondary school students were invited to enter a writing competition "What ANZAC Day in the Riverina means to me."

Hundreds of entries were received with the ones judged most outstanding reprinted on this page and their authors receiving ANZAC-related book prizes.

All who submitted an entry will receive a commemorative certificate.



## A POEM TO RECALL LIVES LOST

*Meg Handsaker,  
11, Year 6, Saint  
Joseph's Primary,  
Leeton*

We will not forget;

Walking down the street, with my head held high marching my feet. As I walk by people sigh as we remember the soldiers that die.

Giving up their lives for us; they did not make a fuss. Going to war, they may not come back at all.

They gave it all up and went away; their families wanted them to stay.

Some didn't have a choice; it was like they couldn't hear their own voice.

This day is filled with misery and sorrow, but we need them, what if war comes back tomorrow?

We will not let ourselves forget it, no, not one little bit. We will carry on singing this song and let tomorrow go on.

We will not forget!

The freedom they fought for may not be theirs no more. Some of them died but they are still with us with their pride.

We will remember them from this day April to December then back to May. ANZAC Day is right in my heart and now ANZAC Day and I will never part.

To march on ANZAC Day, is it asking so much, when we do this some hearts will be touched?

I used to think day was boring, some people would be crying, some laughing, and some roaring, to me it was boring.

But now I know what this day is about and I will spread the word and make it sprout.

I will go on teaching and preaching, spreading the word that I heard.

The word was, we will not forget! And so I won't.

We will not forget.

The main message I am trying to get across is just because the soldiers are gone doesn't mean we will ever forget them.



## MORE TO WWI THAN JUST GALLIPOLI

where 48,000 Australians lost their lives. One of my goals whilst overseas was to locate the grave of Narrandera Digger Sgt Donald Gordon Bock but due to inclement weather conditions and a very tight schedule it was not possible to deviate from the tour. I was disappointed not to be able to discover someone who had paid the ultimate sacrifice for my hometown.

Like many young people my age, I associated World War I with the fatal ANZAC landing at Gallipoli on 25 April 1915. When we learn about war in class most of the focus is on Gallipoli and the spirit of the brave young ANZACs who were courageous, resourceful men who stuck by their mates, scorned authority and never lost their larrikin sense of humour. It was actually in the village of Pozieres in the Somme Valley, and not in Gallipoli, that Australia suffered its highest number of war casualties losing 23,000 men in seven weeks. It is a sobering fact that when

you stand in any one war cemetery in The Somme you can view another cemetery close by on the horizon. I remember the countless soldiers that never made it back home; this is an experience I will never forget.

Although many Australians have fought in many battles over the years, World War I has a special significance to me. This is because these young Australians went to the other side of the world as volunteers. They were so young and they had no idea what lay ahead of them. They were the ANZACs.

As time marches on, the challenge for me, and my generation, is to prove ourselves worthy of the sacrifices that they made.

*(Pictured) PRESENTATION:  
Riverina MP Michael McCormack  
with Narrandera High School Year 12  
students Grace Rees and book-prize  
winner for More to WWI than just  
Gallipoli, Jason McKinnon, both 17.*

I LOOK back at my time with both of my grandfathers and how we marched together on ANZAC Day for the short time we had with each other.

Even though they are no longer with me today I still march and wear their medals to honour their devotion to the Riverina during World War II. To me ANZAC Day is a day of remembrance and a day for reflection.

I was inspired to apply for the 2010 NSW Premier's Memorial ANZAC Scholarship and I was privileged to be successful to tour the World War I battlefields of the Western Front