



# Media Release

The Hon Alan Griffin MP  
Minister for Veterans' Affairs

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## **BATTLE FOR AUSTRALIA DAY PROCLAIMED**

The Battle for Australia will now be marked on the first Wednesday in September each year, the Minister for Veterans' Affairs, Alan Griffin, announced today.

Mr Griffin said the Governor-General, Major General Michael Jeffery AC CVO MC (Retd), had signed the proclamation for the Battle for Australia Day.

The proclamation delivers on a Labor Party election promise to declare a day of national observance for the Battle for Australia.

"Battle for Australia Day will commemorate the service and sacrifice of all those who served in defence of Australia in 1942 and 1943 when we faced the gravest threats to our nation," Mr Griffin said.

"This national day of observance will provide tangible recognition and greater community awareness of the contribution to Australia's freedom and democracy of those who fought in the Battle for Australia.

"There were direct attacks on the Australian mainland, particularly in Darwin, and battles in the Coral Sea and Papua and New Guinea, including Milne Bay and the Kokoda Track."

Prime Minister John Curtin announced the Battle for Australia when Singapore fell on 15 February 1942. However, the first Wednesday in September has been chosen by the veteran community as it represents the first defeat of Japanese forces on land in the Battle of Milne Bay.

"The Day will also be an opportunity to remember the sacrifices of those on the home front, who lived in a time when the entire Australian economy was directed towards the war effort," Mr Griffin said.

Mr Griffin said Battle for Australia Day would not be a public holiday.

"This proclamation will not detract from the importance of Australia's two most significant days of commemoration, Anzac Day and Remembrance Day, on which we remember all Australians who served and died in wars, conflicts and peace operations," Mr Griffin said.

Details of commemorative ceremonies to be held to mark Battle for Australia Day will be published on the Department of Veterans' Affairs website [www.dva.gov.au](http://www.dva.gov.au) when events are confirmed.

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### **Background**

In February 1942, the arc of the Japanese advance had embraced the Western Pacific, the Australian Territory of New Guinea and the Netherlands East Indies.

In the following three months Darwin and other Australian cities were bombed and midget submarines attacked Sydney. By July, Japanese had occupied the Solomons and landed in Papua.

The Australian population of more than seven million was living with wartime controls on their daily lives including rationing, restrictions on movement and with many directed to jobs supporting the war effort. The entire Australia economy was geared towards the defence of Australia and industry from peacetime production to wartime requirements.

Australia was being defended by more than a half a million full time Army, Navy and Air Force personnel and the women's services. The part time Volunteer Defence Corps was also preparing for the defence of Australia. As well as ten Army divisions, the equivalent of one division each was deployed in the Northern Territory and Papua with support from the Navy and Air Force.