



Media Release

The Hon Alan Griffin MP
Minister for Veterans' Affairs

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“COBBERS” STATUE — TRIBUTE TO FROMELLES FALLEN

On the 92nd anniversary of the Battle of Fromelles a replica of the magnificent “Cobbers” statue at Fromelles was unveiled at the Shrine of Remembrance today by the Victorian Premier John Brumby.

Speaking at the reception, the Minister for Veterans' Affairs, Alan Griffin said the iconic “Cobbers” statue was a fitting tribute to the men who served on the battlefields along the Western Front.

“The statue tells the story of Sergeant Simon Fraser who, after the horrific 24-hour battle that was the Battle of Fromelles, returned to the battlefield with his fellow comrades to rescue wounded Australians,” Mr Griffin said.

“Under fire they managed to rescue around 300 men. On one of his trips back to the battlefield Sergeant Fraser heard a plea from one soldier ‘*Don't forget me cobber*’, and he didn't.”

“The battle was, and remains, the worst 24 hours in Australian wartime history. 5533 Australians were casualties of the Battle of Fromelles including 1917 killed, 3146 wounded, and 470 taken prisoner.”

Mr Griffin said the original “Cobbers” statue by Australian sculptor Peter Corlett stands in the Australian Memorial Park at Fromelles in France.

“I am pleased Australia now has a replica of this great statue. The many thousands of visitors to the Shrine each year will now be able to see a great tribute to the mateship of Australians on the Western Front,” he said.

Mr Griffin said honouring Australia's past and present servicemen and women is a priority of the Rudd Government.

“Australia suffered its greatest losses on the battlefields across the Western Front. This year, to recognise the 90th anniversary of the final battles fought there, the Government held the first Anzac Day Dawn Service at Villers-Bretonneux. This service will now be held every Anzac Day.

“Later this year, the Australian Corps Memorial at Le Hamel will be re-dedicated, and the story of Australians on the Western Front is now told on my Department's new website, www.ww1westernfront.gov.au,” he said.

“The website takes us on a journey to the places where Australians served and died, and it provides a vivid picture of our wartime history through the experiences of our servicemen and women.”

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