



Media Release

The Hon Alan Griffin MP
Minister for Veterans' Affairs

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HISTORIC AGREEMENT BETWEEN FLANDERS AND AUSTRALIA RECOGNISES SHARED WAR HISTORY

Flemish Minister-President, Kris Peeters, and Minister for Veterans' Affairs, Alan Griffin, today signed an historic agreement to preserve historic sites, recognise shared history and honour the fallen of two world wars.

Signing the '*Arrangement between the Government of Flanders and the Government of Australia related to cooperation in the field of shared history of the world wars of the twentieth century*' with Mr Peeters in Brussels, Mr Griffin said he was pleased by the cooperation between Australia and Flanders.

"The signing of the agreement today demonstrates the Australian Government's commitment to increasing understanding, particularly amongst younger people, about our wartime history and its importance in the development of both our nations," said Mr Griffin.

"The battlefields in Belgium were the scene of some of the darkest days for Australia during the First World War where Australian servicemen perished in their thousands.

"The poem 'In Flanders fields' is often heard at Australian commemorative services and we remember the soldiers who fell at Messines, the Menin Road, Polygon Wood, Broodseinde and Passchendaele during our involvement in the 3rd Battle of Ypres in 1917, as well as those who fell in less well known actions."

Mr Peeters shares Mr Griffin's belief in preserving historic and commemorative wartime sites for future generations.

"We remember the contribution of Australia's servicemen and women, and with the signing of today's agreement, make a commitment to honour their sacrifice and educate younger generations about our shared history," said Mr Peeters.

Agreements to preserve wartime history have also been signed between Flanders and New Zealand in 2007 and between Australia and France in 2003.

Mr Griffin is in Europe for Western Front Anzac Day commemorations. The Australian Government will be conducting an Anzac Day Dawn Service at Villers-Bretonneux in France on Saturday, 25 April 2009. Australians travelling in France are invited to attend.

Information on the Western Front Anzac Day Dawn Service is available at <http://www.dva.gov.au/media/mainme.htm>

Minister Griffin - media inquiries: Laura Ryan – M: +61 (0)437 863 109

Minister-President Peeters - media inquiries: Els Wynant – E: els.wynant@vlaanderen.be