



# Media Release

The Hon Alan Griffin MP  
Minister for Veterans' Affairs

The Hon Warren Snowdon MP  
Minister for Defence Science and Personnel

VA047

Wednesday, 3 June 2009

## WORK STARTS ON NEW WAR CEMETERY AT FROMELLES

The Minister for Veterans' Affairs, Alan Griffin and the Minister for Defence Science and Personnel, Warren Snowdon have welcomed news that construction of the war cemetery at Fromelles in France has commenced, following the Commonwealth War Graves Commission's (CWGC) announcement of the cemetery's builder.

"The Commonwealth War Graves Commission has selected Beton-Bouw Bentein BVBA to build the cemetery, which will be the first new war cemetery in almost fifty years," Mr Griffin said.

"The family-owned firm has worked on more than 30 cemeteries, including Tyne Cot in Belgium which is the largest British and Commonwealth war cemetery in the world.

"The new cemetery is to be known as Fromelles (Pheasant Wood) Military Cemetery and is where the remains of up to 400 Australian and British servicemen who died during the Battle of Fromelles in July 1916 will be re-interred.

"Australia suffered 5533 casualties at the Battle of Fromelles including 1917 killed, 3146 wounded and 470 taken prisoner, making it the worst 24 hours in Australian war time history.

"The Fromelles (Pheasant Wood) Military Cemetery will be place of pilgrimage for Australians, as well as our allies, and will honour the diggers' courage and sacrifice for many generations to come," Mr Griffin said.

The location for the new cemetery, which overlooks the battlefield, was decided after consideration by the CWGC's horticultural and structural experts and following discussions with the people of Fromelles and the Australian, British and French authorities.

The cemetery will be flexible in design, given that it is not yet known how many soldiers are buried at Fromelles.

Mr Snowdon said the remains of the Australian and British men currently lie in a number of mass graves in an area known as Pheasant Wood.

"Work has already begun to exhume the men buried in five mass graves at Pheasant Wood. The recovery of the remains is planned to be completed by September 2009," Mr Snowdon said.

"The diggers will then be permanently laid to rest with full military honours in individual graves at the new Fromelles (Pheasant Wood) Military Cemetery and it is my hope that many of these soldiers will be laid to rest under named headstones."

### *Notes for Editors*

1. A map of the cemetery site is available at [www.cwgc.org/fromelles/?page=english/sitemap](http://www.cwgc.org/fromelles/?page=english/sitemap)
2. Regular updates on the progress of the exhumation is available at [www.army.gov.au/fromelles/](http://www.army.gov.au/fromelles/)

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