



# Media Release

The Hon Alan Griffin MP  
Minister for Veterans' Affairs

The Hon Justine Elliot MP  
Minister for Ageing

Steve Gibbons MP  
Member for Bendigo

VA012

Wednesday, 11 March 2009

## **HAPPY 110<sup>TH</sup> BIRTHDAY TO AUSTRALIA'S LAST REMAINING WW1 SERVICEMAN JACK ROSS**

The Australian Government today officially paid tribute to Australia's last remaining First World War serviceman and oldest Australian male, John Ross or 'Jack' who celebrates his 110<sup>th</sup> birthday today.

Prime Minister, Mr Kevin Rudd has also written to Mr Ross formally recognising his milestone.

By reaching his 110<sup>th</sup> birthday, Mr Ross is now part of a select group known as supercentenarians.

The Minister for Veterans' Affairs, Mr Alan Griffin, and Minister for Ageing, Mrs Justine Elliot, wished Mr Ross a very happy day on this momentous occasion.

"I congratulate Mr Ross on reaching such a milestone. He volunteered to serve his country in two world wars and has seen Australia change a great deal over the last 110 years," Mr Griffin said.

Mrs Elliot said that we can learn so much from the wisdom, knowledge and experience of older Australians like Mr Ross.

"In his lifetime, Mr Ross has not only lived through two World Wars, but also witnessed the rise of the automobile and air travel, two Halley's comets and the Federation of Australia," Mrs Elliot said.

In January 1918, at 18 years of age, Mr Ross enlisted in the Australian Imperial Force. He trained at the Wireless Training School and was posted to the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion at Broadmeadows Camp in Victoria. The war ended before Mr Ross could be posted overseas and he was discharged on Christmas Eve, 1918.

"Mr Ross is our last link to a generation of young men who served in the First World War. By the time Mr Ross enlisted, our young nation had already suffered massive casualties on the battlefields of Gallipoli, Palestine and the Western Front, yet Mr Ross volunteered to join them on the front line," Mr Griffin said.

Jack Ross served his country again in the Second World War as a member of the Volunteer Defence Corps.

In his civilian life, Mr Ross worked for the Victorian Railways for more than 45 years and retired in 1964. He now lives in Bendigo, Victoria, and has a daughter, Peggy, a son, Robert, four grandchildren and nine great grandchildren.

Member for Bendigo, Mr Steve Gibbons said: "To have Australia's oldest digger in our community is an honour and a privilege.

"On behalf of the people of Bendigo, I wish Mr Ross a very happy birthday," Mr Gibbons said.

Mr Ross was awarded the 80<sup>th</sup> *Anniversary Armistice Remembrance Medal*, Australia's first commemorative honour, marking the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 1998 of the end of the First World War. Mr Ross also received the *Centenary Medal*, which recognised living Australians who had contributed to Australian society in the 100 years since Federation.

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