



Media Release

The Hon Alan Griffin MP
Minister for Veterans' Affairs

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\$5000 GRANT HELPS RESTORE HISTORIC POW ARTWORK

The Minister for Veterans' Affairs, Alan Griffin, today announced that art documenting the experience of allied prisoners on the Thai-Burma railway will be restored with the help of Australian Government funding.

Mr Griffin said the photographic replicas of artwork by Prisoner of War (POW) Jack Chalker is displayed at the Weary Dunlop Memorial Peace Park near Hellfire Pass, Thailand.

"Jack Chalker was a prisoner at the camps and as an artist, recorded the experiences of prisoners through drawings. His pieces pictured camp life, the work on the railway and many of the medical procedures that doctors such as Weary Dunlop undertook in the camp hospital," Mr Griffin said.

"Chalker secretly made drawings of the various camps and conditions endured by the prisoners. He drew and painted on whatever materials he could find or steal from the Japanese."

The Minister spoke today at the Sir Edward 'Weary' Dunlop Medical Research Foundation Veterans' and Military Health Symposium – Weary Dunlop survived the Thai-Burma railway and is remembered for his courage and the assistance he provided to fellow POWs.

"Weary was a great Australian who helped save the lives of many allied soldiers during the war and whose legacy has continued through institutions like the Foundation in Australia," Mr Griffin said.

"Chalker's art provides a moving record of the prisoners' experiences during the Second World War and the heroism and strength of men like Weary Dunlop."

In 2002, Chalker's original drawings were dispersed between the Imperial War Museum in London and the Australian War Memorial in Canberra. The Weary Dunlop Peace Park near Hellfire Pass is claimed to be the only place where the complete collection can be seen together near the location of where they originated.

The funding, provided through the *Overseas Privately-Constructed Memorial Restoration Program*, will help reproduce and display the replicas of Chalker's historic artwork in the Peace Park gallery.

Some 9500 Australian prisoners of war worked on the construction of the Thai-Burma railway, which ran from Bampong, Thailand, to Thanbyuzayat, Burma. 2646 Australians died working on the railway before its completion on 16 October 1943.

For more information on the *Overseas Privately-Constructed Memorial Restoration Program* visit www.dva.gov.au/grants

Media inquiries: Belinda Cole 0437 863 109

Editors note: Images of Jack Chalker's artwork are available from the Australian War Memorial <http://www.awm.gov.au/exhibitions/stolenyears/ww2/japan/burmatai/story3.asp>

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