



THE HON. GREG COMBET AM MP
Minister for Defence Personnel, Materiel and Science

THE HON. ALAN GRIFFIN MP
Minister for Veterans' Affairs

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BURIAL OF FROMELLES SOLDIERS BEGINS

Ninety-three years after they fell in the Battle of Fromelles, the first of 250 Australian and British soldiers has finally been buried with full military honours at a ceremony in France.

On the first day of burials for the Australian and British soldiers recovered last year from Fromelles, the Minister for Veterans' Affairs, Alan Griffin, and Minister for Defence Personnel, Materiel and Science, Greg Combet, encouraged the Australian public to pause and reflect on the sacrifices of those who serve in the Armed Forces.

"These men have not been forgotten and today marks the start of the solemn duty of finally laying them to rest," Mr Griffin said.

"The discovery of these men, so long after World War One, provides new generations of Australians with an opportunity to honour their service."

The soldiers are being buried in individual graves in the purpose-built Fromelles (Pheasant Wood) Military Cemetery. Mr Griffin said the new cemetery is the first full cemetery the Commonwealth War Graves Commission has constructed in more than 50 years.

The burials will occur throughout February and be conducted by members of both the British and Australian Armies.

A commemorative event to open the cemetery is scheduled for the 94th anniversary of the Battle of Fromelles on 19 July 2010.

Mr Combet said the Government was hopeful that anthropological, archaeological, historical and DNA information will lead to the identification of some of the men.

"While identification of the remains is an extremely complex process I remain hopeful that we will be able to identify a number of those that we have found," Mr Combet said.

The battle on 19 July 1916 was the bloodiest 24 hours in Australian history with 5,533 Australian soldiers killed, wounded or missing.

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