



Media Release

The Hon Warren Snowdon MP

Minister for Veterans' Affairs

Minister for Defence Science and Personnel

Minister for Indigenous Health

Minister Assisting the Prime Minister on the Centenary of Anzac

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OFFICIAL WAR ARTIST BEN QUILTY WELCOMED HOME FROM AFGHANISTAN

Minister for Veterans' Affairs and Minister for Defence Science and Personnel, Warren Snowdon, has welcomed home Archibald Prize winning artist Ben Quilty, one of the Australian War Memorial's official war artists, from a tour of Afghanistan.

Inspired by his tour, Mr Quilty has already produced some work, with plans underway to produce pieces capturing the spirit of Australian Defence Force (ADF) members in Afghanistan and the Australian experience of war.

Mr Snowdon says the official war artist has a long tradition dating back almost a century to the First World War.

"Official war artists have depicted both world wars, the Korean and Vietnam wars, peacekeeping operations in East Timor and the Solomons and most recently the Afghan conflict in their artworks, many remain on display at the Australian War Memorial."

"Having Australian artists paint, photograph or record the experiences of Australians at war adds a very emotional and personal perspective, which is often lost in the news coverage," Mr Snowdon said.

The Assistant Director of the Australian War Memorial's National Collection, Nola Anderson, says as the latest official war artist for the Memorial, Ben Quilty joins a long line of distinguished artists, beginning with those such as George Lambert and Arthur Streeton who were commissioned during the First World War."

Mr Quilty is the fourth artist the Memorial has sent to Afghanistan to record Australia's current deployments, Lyndall Brown, Charles Green and Shaun Gladwell have previously produced artwork inspired by the Afghan conflict.

From 11 October until 3 November 2011, Mr Quilty was attached to the ADF observing its activities in Kabul, Kandahar and Tarin Kowt, recording and interpreting the experiences of Australian service personnel who are deployed as part of *Operation Slipper*.

As part of the commission, Mr Quilty's will produce a number of works for the Memorial's National Collection over the coming six months.

“Mr Quilty’s works will explore the highly challenging roles faced by service personnel and their day to day experiences in the field,” Ms Anderson said.

“The Afghanistan landscape is a major part of what our service men and women face in the current conflict and it will no doubt feature prominently.”

The Archibald Prize winner brings great experience to the commission, and employs a wide range of genres including portraits, figurative subjects, still life and landscapes, frequently exploring the machines and rituals related to contemporary street cultures.

Mr Quilty is a major Australian artist who creates bold large-scale pictures, using vibrant colours and broad brush strokes that build thick layers of oil paint.

He is represented throughout Australian national and state galleries and frequently exhibits in major national group and solo exhibitions including a major retrospective in 2009, at the University of Queensland Art Museum.

He won the Archibald prize this year with a portrait of the late Margaret Olley.

Media inquiries: Minister Snowdon: Marcus Butler 02 6277 7820 or 0417 917 796
Australian War Memorial: Tom Vasey 02 6243 4575 or 0409 600 038
media@awm.gov.au