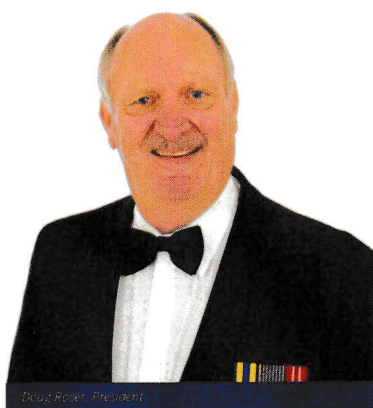


Patron: His Excellency General The Honourable David Hurley AC DSC (Ret'd) Governor of New South Wales

## NEWSLETTER

September 2018

### Presidents Address to Battle for Australia Commemoration Service, September 5, 18



Doug Foster, President

Along with many others across Australia, in Canberra, Melbourne, and Brisbane we are gathered here today to commemorate the Battle for Australia, which consisted of a number of campaigns occurring between January 1942 and March 1943. We should remember that this period was the only time that Australia has experienced a direct threat and at a time when all three of our forces of the time were deployed overseas in the Middle East, Europe and the UK.

I was born during this period and in my early years I can remember how the war at that time affected our whole family and those around us. I remember the Americans in the area and their aircraft at Oakey on the Darling Downs. At 16, I joined the RAAF as an apprentice. Many of those who had fought in World War 2, including the Battle for Australia in the Pacific, were still in the RAAF, so I got to know many of them very well including their experiences during the war. I am still in contact with some of these and still see the veterans from this period at many of the reunions and commemoration service I attend. I often get emotional at these gatherings as I see their numbers dwindling and I realise it won't be many years before we don't have any of them left to share our lives and their history.

So today is a very special occasion for me when I personally remember the many faces of these men and women who served in the Battle for Australia as well as those who stayed at home, who supported those fighting overseas, and who worked to develop the industries which contributed so much to the eventual victory in the Pacific. I remember those who I knew personally and who never returned. And I would ask

### Other Battle for Australia Commemoration Services

In addition to our Service at the Cenotaph, Battle for Australia Commemoration Services will be held on the same day at:

- The Captain Reg Saunders Courtyard at the Australian War Memorial Canberra at 11am
- The Battle for Australia Memorial, Chermide Historical Precinct, 61 Kittyhawk Drive, Chermide, Brisbane at 11am, and
- The Shrine of Remembrance, Melbourne at 11.00am

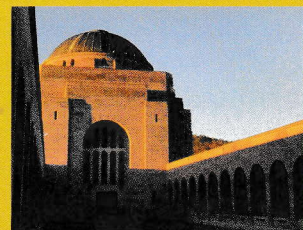


Photo of Australian War Memorial, Canberra, taken by G Dawson

all of you here today, as we proceed through the Service, to think of your families who went through this period and those who served in the forces. They were a great generation with unique qualities and who gave us the Australia we all enjoy today. Also remember those who are currently serving in our military forces and the fantastic job they are doing.

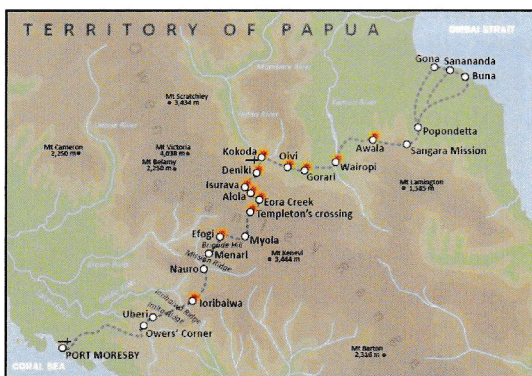
As you would expect I am a member of the RSL, which in NSW is going through some difficult changes as it positions itself to meet its objectives in this time and place. We are fortunate to have the RSL represented here today. I recognise the RSL in this special way because the mission of the RSL highlights what today is about.

### Respecting, supporting and remembering our veterans and their families

So please join with our Association here today in remembering the veterans and families who went through the Battle for Australia and when you are lucky enough to meet and talk to any of them remember how much we owe them. As always, we have some very special people and organisations with us today who ensure this Service achieves its aims and I thank you all for your contribution. But in particular I thank the Schools and the school children participating today. It is to you that we will pass the baton to carry on the remembrance of those who have served to give us the special country we live in today and the society we are.

Lest we forget.

## Kokoda Memorial



Map of Kokoda Trail. Picture from: <http://kokodahistorical.com.au/history/kokoda-campaign>

Kokoda was taken by the Japanese on July 29 1942, and the trail fighting was some of the most desperate and vicious encountered by Australian Troops in the Second World War. It was eventually retaken by Australian Forces on November 2, 1942.

The single-file foot thoroughfare, enclosed by the surrounding jungle, linked Owers' Corner, 40km North-East of Port Moresby, and the village of Wairopi on the Northern side of the Owen Stanley Mountain Range in Papua New Guinea. The village of Kokoda, from which the memorial take its name, contains memorials and a museum containing information panels, commemorating the sacrifices of Australian Troops and the PNG people who assisted them during the campaign in 1942.



Left: Kokoda Memorial, Papua New Guinea. Picture from: <http://auspng.lowyinstitute.org/publications/kokoda-volunteering-how-i-was-inspired-give-back-png>

Right: PAPUA. 1942-11-14. Allies retake Kokoda. Australian Flag is raised as troops enter KOKODA. Photo from: <http://kokodahistorical.com.au/history/kokoda-campaign>



# AIR FORCE

AIR COMMODORE MIKE KITCHER, AM

Commander Air Combat Group

Representing Air Vice-Marshal Steve Roberton, DSC, AM, the Air Commander Australia, the Keynote Speaker at the commemoration service September 5, 2018, will be Air Commodore Michael Kitcher AM, DSM, Commander Air Combat Group.

Air Commodore Mike 'Kitch' Kitcher is the Commander of Air Combat Group (ACG), responsible for the operations of all RAAF fast jets including 81WG with Classic Hornets (3, 75, 77 Sqn's and 20CU), 82WG with F/A-18F Super Hornets (1SQN) and E/A-18G Growler (6SQN) and 78WG with Hawk 127 (76 and 79 Sqn's). 4SQN under 78WG is responsible for JTAC training and provision of the ADF Combat Controller Capability and operates the PC-9(F) aircraft. ACG is also introducing the F-35A Lightning II to replace the F/A-18A Classic Hornets.



## Background

Air Commodore Mike Kitcher joined the RAAF Academy in January 1984 and graduated from the Australian Defence Force Academy in 1986 with a Bachelor of Science degree. He graduated from No 145 Pilot's Course in 1988 and flew F/A-18 aircraft from 1990 onwards. He graduated from No 23 Fighter Combat Instructor Course in 1994 and served in instructional roles until 1997 and as Executive officer at 75SQN until 2000.

In mid 2000, Air Commodore Kitcher was posted to RAF Advanced Command and Staff College at Watchfield, UK, graduating with a Masters Degree from Kings College, London. In Sep 2001 he was posted to Executive Officer 81WG. In Sep 2002 Air Commodore Kitcher was posted to US

**Continued...**

## Relationship with Hyde Park ANZAC Memorial

Over recent months we have been very fortunate to develop a relationship with the Hyde Park ANZAC Memorial. The enhanced Memorial is to include a place to educate future generations about the Anzac spirit. Accordingly, the design includes a new underground education and interpretation facilities. As per the Memorial's website "Memorial visitors will enter the new 'Hall of Service' via a walkway through a symbolic water cascade. The Hall will function as a greeting and orientation space for the public, including tour groups and school children; and as a venue for ceremonies and functions, flowing onto exhibition galleries and education facilities. An inaugural Anzac Memorial Schools Learning Program for 2018 – 2019 has been developed and the subject of one of specific educational workshop of the Memorial is "War at our door" which matches the focus of our Association ie the operations in the

**Continued...**

CENTCOM and CENTAF as the RAAF Hornet Liaison Officer during planning for Operation Iraqi Freedom. In 2003 he was deputy commander for all RAAF F/A-18 and C-130 operations in Operation Iraqi Freedom and was awarded a Medal of the Order of Australia for his service in the operation. Later in 2003 Air Commodore Kitcher assumed command of No 3 Squadron.

Air Commodore Kitcher was posted to HQAC as the Director of Operations in 2006, and also served as the RAAF AOC Director. Air Commodore Kitcher worked in Defence industry from 2007-10, he then rejoined the permanent Air Force in 2011 as Chief of Staff at Air Combat Group until Dec 2012. Air Commodore Kitcher was then Director of the Australian Defence Force Airworthiness Coordination and Policy Agency in 2013.

Air Commodore Kitcher was promoted in Nov 2013 and commenced duties as Director General Capability Planning – Air Force. In this position Air Commodore Kitcher was responsible for introducing all new capabilities for the RAAF, such as F-35, E/A-18G Growler, P-8, Triton, the new pilot training system with the PC-21 aircraft and major E-7 Wedgetail upgrades. From Jan-June 2017 he served as Commander of the Australian Air Task Group in the Middle East commanding Australian Hornet, Wedgetail and Tanker operations. He was appointed as a Member of the

Order of Australia in June 2017 for exceptional service in air combat sustainment, aviation safety development, and major capability planning and introduction.

Air Commodore Kitcher has over 3500 hours in military aircraft, almost 3000 in F/A-18 Hornets and is an A Category Fighter Combat Instructor.

He lives in Williamstown with his wife Robyn and has three sons. His interests are Rugby, touch football, boating, skiing, surfing and surf lifesaving.



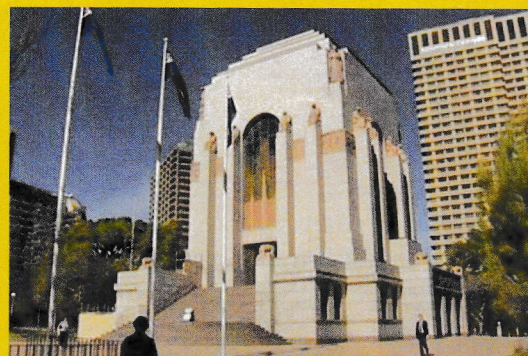
Air Commodore Mike Kitcher, in front of an F/A-18 Hornet at Williamstown.  
<http://www.newsofthearea.com.au/williamtown-raft-base-welcomes-new-commander-air-combat-group-30971>

Pacific during World War 2,

Under the leadership of Ted McKeown, a Committee Member, our Association has a project to develop material for use by schools explaining the role of Australia and our allies in the Pacific war of World War II. It will be web-based and provide overviews of particular aspects and lead into more substantial information via our website and our other material. We have agreed to work closely with the Memorial in the development of this Project.

The Memorial would be interested in any written material and artefacts, which has been developed by our Association or given to us which would contribute to their education workshops. Also, the Memorial would welcome the support of our members or member associations in person at the various workshops during which they could

interact with the participants. The Memorial will also have rooms and an auditorium, which could be used by our Association for meetings and special presentations. Our special presentation on the February 15, is intended to be held at the Memorial.



Hyde Park Sydney Anzac Memorial: Picture from  
<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2015-07-19/sydney-s-anzac-memorial-to-be-redeveloped/6631730>

Gordon Maitland has been a long time champion and supporter of our Association and although he cannot attend our events due to health reasons, we still keep contact with him and remember his great contribution to our Association. Thus we are so pleased he has given us a poem he has written and agreed to its publishing in the newsletter and website. His poem "Kokoda Pilgrimage" is the story of a Kokoda veteran who returned to Papua New Guinea and visited the grave (at Bomana) of a mate killed in that campaign. Incidentally, trail (not track) is the authorised name.

## "Kokoda Pilgrimage"

At last I'm here, my dear friend.  
I told you I'd be back!  
I know I've taken far too long.  
Since we humped a pack.

Nearby is the Kokoda Trail,  
Where friends so bravely fell.  
They are ghosts who haunt the Trail  
With memories of Hell.

That hell endured for months and  
months  
'Twas abject misery;  
Exhausting days and freezing nights  
And only green to see

Trying to sleep among the dead  
While hearing wounded moan.  
Little to eat but bully beef,  
Our bodies – skin and bone.

And this tale of woe continues  
For death was in the air.  
No one escaped the diseases  
In hiding ev'rywhere.

Hook worm was first, then the fevers  
Without care from a nurse.  
Foul dysentery sometimes killed  
But scrub typhus was worse.

The country itself was hostile –  
Gut wrenching climbs every day,  
Slipp'ry, sucking mud to wade  
through,  
False crests along the way.

Just being here brings me to tears –  
A soldier shouldn't cry  
But time can't dim the memories  
Of seeing comrades die.

It's at such times I miss you most –  
Like those days on the Trail;  
When lying in the pit we shared  
Both praying not to fail.

As we tried to pierce the blackness  
About to learn our fate.  
You gave a reassuring nudge  
And told me "Steady Mate".

The maelstrom broke soon afterwards  
Just at the break of day,  
And with it death came marching in  
To join us where we lay.

His messengers worked hard that day,  
I heard the bullets whine,  
Including those that hit their mark  
And killed that mate of mine.

Thus ended our wond'rous journey  
Via desert sand and mud.  
A story of army mateship  
Destined to end in blood.

Though others lost their mates as well  
We ne'er gave up the fight.  
Often hand to hand fighting 'til  
They hoisted flags of white.

We finally had forced our foe  
To cede complete defeat.  
That is why today I stand here  
My dear old mates to meet.

Where are those friends of long ago?  
Young men who gave their all.  
Ever present, they haunt me still  
When evening shadows fall.

They fell in the heat of battle  
From some mist shrouded place,  
Or down a yawning chasm where  
Deafening torrents race.

And for many who died lonely  
No one was there to pray,  
With no one there no hymns were  
sung,  
No bugles heard to play.

But at least they had the comfort  
Of duty nobly done,  
Even if then they did not know  
That in the end we won.

Their spirits were quickly taken  
From those who paid the price  
And sent winging, winging, winging,  
To enter Paradise.

Most bodies lie in a graveyard -  
Bomana is its name.  
With ordered row on ordered row  
And headstones much the same.

A hallowed place of great beauty;  
A place to go and pray.  
A place to go and shed your tears  
On loved ones where they lay.

Saddest of all are missing –  
Those who haven't been found.  
Worn by weather and passing years  
Now but a nameless mound.

They sleep in strange places  
Where man has never trod;  
Sunless, hidden, mysterious  
Known only unto God.

No matter where they all now rest  
They are men that I knew;  
Young men who answered the summons  
Australian bugles blew.

All left a priceless legacy –  
A land secure and free.  
And so we rise to salute them  
A final act for me.

We few who fought and still survive  
Now wait at heaven's door,  
To join those, none but we can see  
TOGETHER EVER MORE.

*Gordon Maitland*



## Centenary of ANZAC Reception

During the Centenary of Anzac period (2014-2018), the NSW Premier has hosted a reception to thank and acknowledge current and former veterans from New South Wales. For this last Centenary of Anzac reception, which will take place in Sydney in November (at a date to be confirmed shortly) the Premier is extending an invitation to as many WWII Veterans as possible still residing in NSW.

Any such Veterans who would like to attend this Reception are asked to contact the President, Doug Roser, on 0412 624 887.

## DVA Repat Book

The Department of Veterans Affairs has added to its collection of great books with the publication of 'Repat' A Concise History of Repatriation in Australia.

Anyone interested in accessing a copy should contact our President, Doug Roser, on 0412 624 887.

## P r e s i d e n t

Doug Roser

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E [dougroser@bigpond.com](mailto:dougroser@bigpond.com)

## Special Presentation – February 15, 2019

Our Committee has decided that the focus of the activities of our Association during 2019 should be on the involvement and impact on the country and residents of Papua New Guinea during the battles and operations during WWII.

Thus for our Special Presentation on February 15 next year the presenter will be Dr Kirstie Close-Barry who is currently a Lecturer and Postgraduate Supervisor at the University of South Pacific and a Research Fellow at Deakin University Burwood, Melbourne. Kirstie's qualifications are a Doctor of Philosophy (History) from Deakin University and a Master of Arts (History) from University of Melbourne. Since 2015 Kirstie has researched and published on the history of Papua New Guinea including memories of Papua New Guineans from World War II. Her more recent research highlights that Australia's history in Papua New Guinea during World War II extended far beyond the Kokoda Trail.

For the presentation on February 15 2019 Kirstie will collaborate with her colleague from Deakin University, Dr Jonathan Ritchie. Since 2014, Dr Jonathan Ritchie and Dr Close-Barry have worked with a team of Papua New Guinean and Australian researchers across PNG to record memories of World War II. This project has been groundbreaking in its collaborative and nation-wide approach, but particularly for the focus on retrieving PNG perspectives of the war which have generally not been heard



Dr Kirstie Close-Barry

beyond the villages where the witnesses have lived. The oral histories are now held by the PNG National Museum and Art Gallery and many will be available online.

Kirstie Close-Barry and another colleague conducted archival research which showed the limits of paper records and reinforced the importance of oral history work in this area. In this talk, Kirstie will present stories from the interviews of those Papua New Guineans who either lived during the war or are descendants of those who have died. The presentation will include details of the contribution made by Aisoli Salin, who worked with coast watcher Cornelius Page around New Ireland and reported Japanese troop movements to the allies.



Australian Troops on Kokoda Track 1942:  
<https://www.papuaerfgoed.org/en/new>

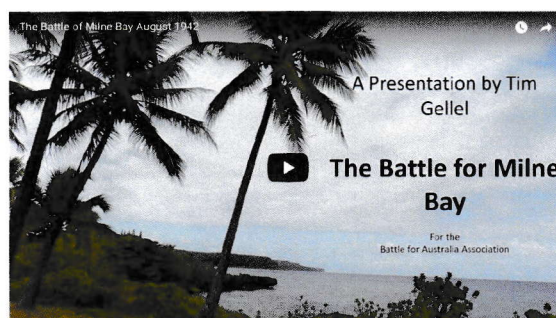
## Address by Tim Gellel – Sydney, February 16, 2018

2018 marks the 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of those operations and battles of the Battle for Australia which occurred in 1943. In recognition of the significance of 1943 in our nation's history, the Battle for Australia Association of NSW hosted a special event this year on the 16 February. On this date we mark the anniversary of the coining of the phrase "Battle for Australia" by Prime Minister John Curtin following the Fall of Singapore in 1942.

The event was an address by Tim Gellel, Head of the Australian Army History Unit. Prior to taking up this position, Tim was an Australian Regular Army Officer, whose thirty-year career included deployments to Afghanistan and Kuwait in support of Australian Special Operations Task Groups, and postings as the Commanding Officer of the Australian Defence Force School of Languages, and as a Defence Attaché and as a student in Japan. He holds a Master of Arts (International Relations) from Deakin University, and is a graduate of the Australian Defence Force School of Languages (Japanese), the Japan Ground Self-Defence Force Command and General Staff Course, and the Japan National Institute for Defence Studies. Tim has authored several articles, and presented on,

Australian and Japanese military history, and is currently completing a manuscript focussed on the Battle of Milne Bay.

You can experience Tim's address by viewing the video on the Battle for Australia Website, 2018 Commemorations page.



<http://www.battleforaustralia.asn.au/2018.php>

The event was well attended by the individuals and ex-service organisations that comprise the Battle for Australia Association. Most have served in the Australian Defence Force, many have relatives who fought in the Defence of Australia in World War 2. The Battle for Australia Association was also pleased to host members of Parliament and the Diplomatic Corps. The event was fostered and in part funded by the Australian Department of Veterans' Affairs

### Call for Committee Members and Volunteers

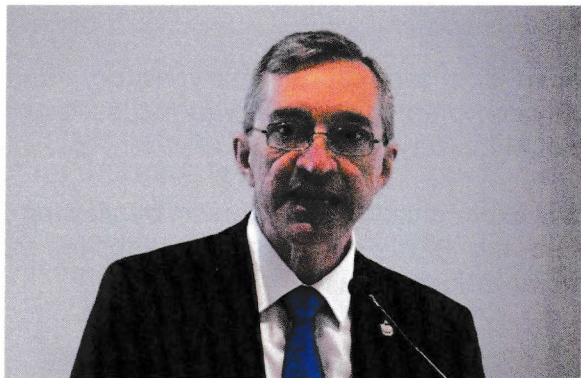
Our Committee meets bi-monthly at DVA's offices and is doing an excellent job of managing the affairs of our Association. However, we are always on the lookout for new talent and currently we urgently require a volunteer to take over from Elizabeth Ramsay to manage our luncheon at the Westin Hotel following our Commemoration Service in September. Elizabeth is particularly well organised and will brief her successor thoroughly but it is important that we find a replacement for her.

### Membership

Our Association relies on the annual fees of our members and the many organisations, particularly RSL sub-branches, which are members to fund our activities. Our membership is steady but we will always welcome new members, so please spread the word. The Application Form can be downloaded from our website and contact details can be accessed on it here:

[http://www.battleforaustralia.asn.au/documents/Membership\\_Form.pdf](http://www.battleforaustralia.asn.au/documents/Membership_Form.pdf)

## A GLANCE BACK



FEBRUARY 16, 2018

