First Sod Turned on ANZAC Interpretive Centre

Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Centenary of ANZAC, Senator the Hon. Michael Ronaldson, and Western Australian Minister for Veterans, Joe Francis MP, today turned the first sod on construction of the Anzac Interpretive Centre in Albany, Western Australia.

Senator Ronaldson said he was delighted that construction had officially begun on the Centre – a key project for the Anzac Centenary – which has been jointly funded by the Australian and Western Australian governments.

“The Anzac Interpretive Centre will be a physical, interpretive and online/interactive centre. It will help increase the understanding of current and future generations of the role of Albany in our First World War history,” Senator Ronaldson said.

“The first convoy of ships that carried Australian and New Zealand troops to the First World War gathered at Albany, in late 1914. The first convoy left for Egypt and Gallipoli on 1 November 1914.”

“In little over a year, Albany will host some of the early events of the Anzac Centenary including a commemorative service to mark the 100th anniversary of the departure of the first convoy and the Anzac Interpretive Centre opening.”

“Today is a significant milestone in the life of the project and I congratulate all involved in the local community, including the RSL and the City of Albany, on their commitment to seeing the Centre become a reality.”

Senator Ronaldson said the Australian Government had allocated $6.55 million to the construction and development of the Anzac Interpretive Centre with the Western Australian Government providing $2.2 million.

Western Australian Veterans’ Minister Joe Francis congratulated BGC Construction Pty Ltd on being awarded the $6.1 million contract to build the Centre.

“I'm very proud that the City of Albany and RSL, led by the Western Australian Government, have worked together in a relatively short time to bring this project to fruition,” Mr Francis said.

“The work being done by the WA Museum in coordinating the development of the interpretive element through collaboration with appointed designers ‘Thylacine’ and a number of other contributors including the Australian War Memorial and the New Zealand National Army Museum (Te Mata Toa) means we will create an amazing experience for visitors.”

“The addition of this Anzac Interpretive Centre and the Commemorative Walk and Lookout to

the Mount Adelaide Fortress significantly increases the relevance and importance of this amazing part of the country's military history. Add to this the refurbished Padre White Lookout and the Desert Mounted Corps Memorial at Mount Clarence, the Lower Forts and the Attaturk Channel and The Peace Park, and Albany will now be the second most important military heritage site in Australia after the Australian War Memorial."

Mr Francis said the Centre would offer a contemporary experience for visitors which would allow people to follow personal stories of men and women who left on the first convoy.

"Importantly, the desired views towards the Southern Channel, Ataturk Channel and Princess Royal Harbour have also been achieved," he said.

"The building ties back to a maritime symbolism with reference made to the plated steel fabrication of ship hulls at each end of the form. It 'floats' above the landscape almost like a vessel at dock in order to capture these critical views."

Mr Francis said planning was well underway for a program of events to support the official commemorative events.

The building was designed by Peter Hunt Architect and is being project managed by the Department of Finance, Building Management and Works.

The centre will be operated by the City of Albany with curatorial services provided by the WA Museum.

Preparatory forward works have been completed at the Mount Adelaide site. Construction is expected to start in mid-November, with completion due in August 2014 in readiness for the finalisation of the interpretive fit out.