

COMMEMORATION WAY PROJECT

Statement by Minister for Veterans

MR J.M. FRANCIS (Jandakot — Minister for Veterans) [2.06 pm]: In the lead-up to Anzac Day this year, I announced the Commemoration Way project, which is an initiative designed to recognise Western Australian recipients of the Victoria Cross and the George Cross. As a state government initiative to support the Anzac centenary, this project will see the installation of 19 plaques at various rest stops along the South Western and Albany Highways. Each plaque will be dedicated to one of Western Australia's 17 Victoria Cross recipients and two George Cross recipients and will contain brief biographical details and part of their citation as gazetted. The concept of this project is based on Remembrance Driveway, on the Federal and Hume Highways between Sydney and Canberra. Some members may be familiar with that system of roadside parks and rest stops on the east coast. It is appropriate that the highways selected for this project lead to Albany because Albany is home to the National Anzac Centre and has a unique connection with the Anzac story. Albany was the last part of Australia many soldiers who were a part of the first two convoys saw as they headed off for Egypt and later Gallipoli during the early stages of the Great War.

The Victoria Cross is awarded for extreme gallantry in the face of the enemy and the George Cross, which is open to service personnel and civilians, was instituted to recognise extreme bravery that did not involve contact with the enemy. In 1975, the Cross of Valour replaced the George Cross. To date, no Western Australian service personnel have been awarded this honour whilst on operations.

The series of plaques will be rolled out between Anzac Day and Remembrance Day 2016. The Department of Corrective Services will provide a work party of minimum-security prisoners to install the plaques. Main Roads Western Australia will update its guide to rest stops and amenities in Western Australia to indicate rest stops that have a plaque of a VC or GC recipient. For those interested in a fuller account of each recipient, the guide will also have a link to the state government publication "This Gallant Company of Brave Men".

The objective of this project is simply to encourage all Western Australians to become more familiar with and maintain a sense of appreciation of these extraordinary 19 Western Australians who showed magnificent heroism despite risk to their own lives.