

ANZAC DAY 2008

185. Mr P. PAPALIA to the Premier:

Will the Premier please inform the house how the state government is helping to honour Anzac Day this year?

Mr A.J. CARPENTER replied:

My predecessor, Dr Gallop, was very keen to ensure that Anzac Day was properly celebrated and commemorated in this state. I, as Minister for Education and Training at the time, required that Anzac Day, by compulsion, be commemorated in state schools when some schools were moving away from that celebration. We have helped to commemorate Anzac Day in a number of innovative ways. Last year I went to Sandakan, Malaysia. The member for Avon and Hon Nigel Hallett, MLC, the member for South West Region, were also there and we took part in the first official commemoration of the Sandakan death march and the events around that in 1945. This year I have been very fortunate to have been invited to join the Anglican Dean of Perth, the Very Reverend Dr John Shepherd, in the presentation of the replica cross in Villers-Bretonneux, France, on Anzac Day. This year's service will be especially important. It marks the ninetieth anniversary of the battle of Villers-Bretonneux. The Western Australian involvement in that battle was extremely significant through the 51st Battalion. Approximately 800 Western Australians were involved in that battle—in fact in the liberation of that village—two or three days before Anzac Day in 1918. Of those 800 or so Western Australians, something along the lines of 389 were lost or killed. It is a hugely significant day for Western Australia. History tells us that this battle was instrumental in turning the tide of the Great War and liberating the French from the occupying German forces. One can only imagine what would happen today if 389 young Western Australians were killed in a single battle in the space of a day or two. It is unthinkable in modern times, but that is what happened. It was not an isolated occurrence but it was an extremely important battle in the latter part of the Great War.

To commemorate this battle, therefore, the state government on behalf of the Western Australian people has provided \$35 000 to the St George's Cathedral choir for the pilgrimage to the battle site of both the original Villers-Bretonneux cross and its replica. The Villers-Bretonneux cross represents the lives of those Western Australians who died there 90 years ago. It was actually relocated from Sydney in 1933, is housed in the cathedral in Perth and is still in excellent condition. The original cross was made as a tribute to those members of the 51st Battalion who fell in that battle and will be permanently housed at St George's Cathedral, Perth. The replica cross, which was made in Western Australia out of Donnybrook stone, is also at the cathedral and will be gifted to the people of Villers-Bretonneux. It will be the focus of the dawn service and will be a proud monument to Western Australia right there at the site of the battle. At the service will be 12 students from across Western Australia who have been selected as part of the Premier's Anzac student tour in 2008.

Mr J.H.D. Day: Are you going?

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: I am not going on the student tour. It was an initiative put in place by Premier Gallop. I think he accompanied the students on the tour two or three times, and at least one year he took the then opposition leader, the member for Kalgoorlie, which was a memorable event. I apologise to the member for Kalgoorlie for raising the subject! I am not going on the tour, but my trip to Villers-Bretonneux will intersect with the tour while we are there. I understand that at least two members of the Liberal Party are attending there under their own steam on their imprest allowance. I look forward to seeing them there. The students will be taking part in a 10-day tour of the Western Front battle sites, an education tour that I am sure will be both enlightening and emotional for all those students.

May I take this opportunity to inform the house that after the Villers-Bretonneux ceremony on Anzac Day, I will be travelling with a trade delegation to Russia where I will be undertaking trade and investment talks with government and business officials. It is an ideal time to promote investment opportunities in Western Australia. As some members in the chamber would know, Russia has emerged as an economic powerhouse. Australian exports to Russia have expanded rapidly from \$180 million in 2001-02 to \$660 million in 2006-07. Western Australia's share of that has risen from 13 to 17 per cent. A number of Russian-based companies are investing, or are intending to invest, here in Western Australia, including Norilsk Nickel, Magnitorsk Iron and Steel, and Metalloinvest. Quite a few of those companies and others travelled through Perth to coincide with the Australian Pacific Economic Cooperation meeting in Sydney last year.

While in Russia, I am also hoping to meet some of the country's leading radioastronomers at the Russian Academy of Sciences in Moscow to discuss Western Australia's bid for the Square Kilometre Array, or SKA, project. As we know, this is a \$2 billion project and potentially a vastly beneficial project for Western Australia. So far our efforts are working out very well. As members would know, a major radioastronomy conference is occurring in Perth right now. This will be an important trip for the state. I hope for the sake of the member for Geraldton that we are able to achieve support from Russian radioastronomers, and I look forward to promoting Western Australia, opening new investment doors and attracting wealth-creating opportunities for our state.

