



Department of
Education and Training

Media Statement

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State colours for teachers on ANZAC tour

Rockingham teachers Mike White and Justin Davies are one step closer to a life-changing tour to the Western Front, after receiving their official black and gold Premier's ANZAC Student Tour uniforms from Education Minister Liz Constable.

Mr White, who is Deputy Principal at Safety Bay Senior High School, and Mr Davies, of Rockingham Senior High School, are part of a group of four teachers and 12 secondary students from across Western Australia who will be travelling to France and Belgium this April, in what has become a popular history education program in the State.

Dr Constable said the students would pay tribute to the 18,000 soldiers who died at the Western Front, but whose remains have never been found.

"One of the many historic sites the tour group will visit will be Fromelles, where a mass grave of previously missing British and Australian soldiers has recently been found and will soon be recovered," Dr Constable said.

"The Western Front forms a crucial part of Australian history, contributed greatly to the ANZAC legend and has significant links to many Western Australian families.

"As occurred during the Gallipoli campaign, Australia was to experience more loss of human life on the Western Front. However, the Australian experience on the Western Front also helped change the course of the war and shape our Nation.

"The place names of Western Front battles, such as Fromelles, Pozieres and Villers Bretonneux, have now become as important in commemoration as they were in conflict.

"The students on the Premier's ANZAC Student Tour will have an opportunity to walk in the footsteps of the 313,000 Australian soldiers who fought at the front."

Mr White has taught modern history for more than twenty years and until last year served in the Army Reserve as a Captain in A Squadron Tenth Light Horse. After taking part in earlier tours, Mr White will fill the Tour Leader role in the 2009 tour.

"During this tour I hope to acknowledge my Great Uncle Adolf Knable, who was killed at Fromelles and whose name is recorded at VC Corner," he said.

"The current recovery of missing soldiers near Fromelle is of great interest to my family and me, as it is believed Adolf's body was buried there during the war. Another powerful experience during this tour will be to watch and support the emotional and intellectual growth of the students on the tour."

Adolf Knable's cousin Hamel White also served in World War I – he won a Military Medal at Mouquet Farm and subsequently died of his wounds.

In addition to managing science and technology and enterprise for Years 8 to 10 at his school, Mr Davies is also a currently serving RAAF officer with 25 SQN at Pearce Air Base.

"I am really looking forward to the Menin Gate – I think that up to that point, the scale of the sacrifice made by the AIF is only numbers, but seeing the names will make that sacrifice real," he said.

"I think the understanding I will develop from witnessing the battlefields first hand will put the Western Front into a better perspective and greatly enable me to pass that on to my students."

Mr Davies has family connections in every war Australia has fought, from the Boer War to Vietnam (except Korea). His great uncle Tom Bryant was injured during the August Offensive at Gallipoli during World War I.

In addition to meeting the Minister last Tuesday, the 2009 Premier's ANZAC Student Tour participants and the Department of Education and Training Director General Sharyn O'Neill attended morning tea with the WA Governor Dr Ken Michael AC, which was followed by lunch with RSL representatives at ANZAC House.

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