



Robyn Preston MP

Member for Hawkesbury

MEDIA RELEASE

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REMEMBERING THE END OF THE SECOND WORLD WAR IN HAWKESBURY

Member for Hawkesbury, Robyn Preston MP has joined the local community to pause and reflect on Australia's efforts in the Second World War as we mark the 75th anniversary of Victory in the Pacific (VP DAY).

VP Day on August 15, 1945 was the official end of a war in which nearly 1 million Australians served in the armed forces. More than 39,000 Australians lost their lives, more than 23,000 were wounded, and more than 30,000 were taken prisoner of war.

"This legacy is as strong in Hawkesbury today, as it was 75 years ago, when Victory in the Pacific was declared," Ms Preston said.

"We might be in the middle of a different battle against this pandemic but that should not prevent us from recognising those who gave up so much to protect our country and our freedom.

"What our communities are going through right now is very challenging but we must remember the bravery, courage and sacrifice from Australians who fought for their country in the Second World War."

Acting Minister for Veterans Geoff Lee paid tribute to the brave men and women who served in the Second World War.

"The day the Second World War officially ended is a major moment in our history and we have made a big effort this year to not let it be forgotten while we are fighting this pandemic," Mr Lee said.

"As we mark the 75th anniversary of Victory in the Pacific we remember the ultimate sacrifice paid by the men and women who served.

"They fought throughout the Pacific defending our nation, while on the home front, hundreds of thousands more contributed to essential services to support the war effort."

The NSW Government has compiled a digital catalogue of articles and videos of WWII veterans and widows telling their stories to ensure their efforts in the Second World War are not forgotten.

Dorothy Curtis, a Private from the Australian Women's Army Service, whose first assignment was the Cape Banks Army Station at La Perouse, is one of many to share her memories.

"We had an enormous plotting table that showed the outline of the coast," she said.

“We would get information from the Army outposts to chart the course of ships on the plotting table. We had to make sure they were our ships and not Japanese ships.”

Ms Curtis recalls the day the war ended.

“I remember going into the city with my friends. We went berserk. People were dancing in the city. Sydney went mad,” Ms Curtis said.

Gerald Hewish was 18 when he enlisted in the Royal Australian Navy in 1940 and served until 1946.

He was on HMAS Melville during the bombing of Darwin by aircraft of the Imperial Japanese Navy that killed 237 people and destroyed ships, buildings and essential services across the Northern Territory city. Six large vessels were sunk and another 14 were damaged. The MV Neptuna exploded at the wharf causing massive damage. The greatest loss of life occurred when the destroyer USS Peary sank killing 88 people.

“It’s not something I like to talk about because it was a difficult time,” Mr Hewish said.

“It was horrific. There was a lot of damage and you can never forget a moment like that. It took everyone by surprise and it impacted everyone who lived and worked in Darwin including those of us in the defence forces.”

“These stories inspire us and help keep the memory of what our servicemen and women went through. They will ensure that future generations remember and honour their sacrifice”, Ms Preston added.

Stories from NSW veterans from the Second World War can be viewed on the NSW Government Stories page:

<https://www.warmemorialsregister.nsw.gov.au/nsw-stories>

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