



Department of
Education and Training

Media Statement

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Rockingham teachers returns from the Western Front

Two local teachers have returned from a life-changing trip to the Western Front in France and Belgium, as part of the 2009 Premier's ANZAC Student Tour.

Deputy Principal Mike White of Safety Bay Senior High School and Rockingham Senior High School Science Technology and Environment sub-school manager Justin Davies led a group of 12 students from across the State who won a place on the history tour, which culminated with ANZAC commemorations at Ieper and Zonnebeke in Belgium.

The tour group's ANZAC commemorations began a day early on April 24 when students formed an honour guard and laid a wreath at the nightly Last Post service at Menin Gate in Ieper, joined by Western Australian Agent General Kerry Sanderson.

The highlights continued on ANZAC Day with a dawn service at Polygon Wood, followed by the opening of a new exhibition at the Zonnebeke Museum, a special morning Last Post service at Menin Gate and speeches at the Ieper Town Hall.

Throughout the tour, the students also visited key landmarks, memorials and battlefields on the First World War Western Front, including Pozieres, Villers-Bretonneux, Fromelles, Pheasant Wood, Thiepval and Le Hamel.

Mike White was fortunate enough to visit the site at Pheasant Wood where his great uncle is believed to be buried in an unmarked grave. A recovery of the fallen soldiers is expected to begin this year.

"The highlight really is watching the intellectual and emotional growth of the students, and the depth of understanding they develop through the tour," Mike said.

"They really internalise at a personal level the impact of what happened to the soldiers, their families and Australia."

Justin said taking part in the dawn service at Polygon Wood and visiting the Windmill site at Pozieres were highlights.

"By being there you get a perspective on how such a tiny little feature dominated the landscape and how it took so much bloodshed to secure the position," he said.

"The scale of sacrifice is dawning on the students on tour and that started to hit home at Villers-Bretonneux."

Applications for the 2010 ANZAC Student Tour are open now and close on 14 August 2009. Secondary school students from Years 8 to 11 throughout WA are encouraged to apply. For more information visit the Department of Education and Training Premier's ANZAC Student Tour website at www.det.wa.edu.au/ANZAC.

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