



## **The Hon Darren Chester MP**

Minister for Veterans' Affairs

Minister for Defence Personnel

Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Centenary of ANZAC

### **MEDIA RELEASE**

25 April 2018

#### **SIR JOHN MONASH CENTRE OPENS ON ANZAC DAY 2018, THE CENTENARY OF THE SECOND BATTLE OF VILLERS-BRETONNEUX**

THE centrepiece of Australia's Anzac Centenary 2014–18, the Sir John Monash Centre, opens in France today, honouring more than 295,000 soldiers who served on the Western Front and the 46,000 who died there.

The Sir John Monash Centre, named after the commander who led Allied troops to victory at the famous Battle of Hamel in 1918, is located alongside the historic Australian National Memorial at Villers-Bretonneux, north of Paris.

The Centre was officially opened by Prime Minister of Australia, the Hon. Malcolm Turnbull MP, and the Prime Minister of France Édouard Philippe.

Veterans' Affairs Minister Darren Chester said the Sir John Monash Centre would introduce new audiences to the selfless contribution of Australian men and women during the First World War.

"The story of Australians on the Western Front deserves to be better known in both Australia and Europe," Mr Chester said.

"Gallipoli holds a special place in our nation's story, but our greatest achievements and heaviest losses of the First World War were in France and Belgium.

"When war broke out, Australia had to mount an entirely voluntary army. Ordinary men and women signed up and answered the call, and found themselves in extraordinary circumstances on the other side of the world."

Mr Chester said the Sir John Monash Centre offered an innovative and engaging way of presenting history, offering an immersive multimedia experience.

*Veterans and Veterans Families Counselling Service (VVCS) can be reached 24 hours a day across Australia for support and free and confidential counselling. Phone 1800 011 046 (international: +61 8 8241 4546). VVCS is a service founded by Vietnam veterans.*

“This is an interpretive centre rather than a museum in the traditional sense. It is underpinned by sophisticated technology that will be seamless and appeal to visitors of all ages and origins,” Mr Chester said.

“A team of historians and multimedia specialists have drawn on archival research from throughout the world, including the extensive war records in Australia, to present the soldiers’ stories in their own words.

“The resulting experience will be self-paced and guided via the Centre’s app. More than 450 Bluetooth beacons will determine visitors’ locations and prompt servers to launch video content to one of the nearest 450 screens and 10 projectors.

“Visitors will receive content via their personal devices, in a choice of three languages – English, French and German.

“This is a very ambitious project – one that will further increase visitation on the Australian Remembrance Trail along the Western Front and one that my department is proud to deliver on time and under budget.

“Many Australians have an ancestor who fought and/or died in the First World War, and I encourage everyone to know that story and to visit the Sir John Monash Centre on their own journey of remembrance.”

Australian firms Cox Architecture and Convergence Associates designed the architectural and interpretive elements for the Sir John Monash Centre, while Wildbear Entertainment produced the multimedia content, and Melbourne based Transpire developed the interactive Audio Visual platform.

For more information visit [www.sjmc.gov.au](http://www.sjmc.gov.au).

**ENDS**

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