

MEDIA RELEASE

The Hon Greg Hunt MP
Federal Member for Flinders

The Hon Martin Dixon MP
State Member for Nepean

Friday, 13th June 2014

Commemorating Point Nepean's Role in WWI

Both the Commonwealth and the Victorian governments have announced funding for a major World War I commemoration at Point Nepean National Park in August.

The free, public event will mark the 100th anniversary of the British Empire's first shot of WWI, which was fired from Fort Nepean's gun emplacement No. 6 at 12.45pm on 5th August 1914, less than four hours after war was declared in London.

The shot was fired across the bow of the German Freighter *SS Pfalz* as its crew desperately tried to steam out of the heads to the relative safety of the open ocean. The *Pfalz* was successfully captured and later became part of Australia's war effort.

On August 5th this year, Point Nepean will once again echo to the sound of artillery fire when the Governor of Victoria, Alex Chernov, and other distinguished guests gather at the former Officer Cadet School Parade Ground at Point Nepean to commemorate the significance of that first shot.

The State Government, through Parks Victoria and Veterans' Affairs, will invest over \$350,000 on new facilities at Fort Nepean to enhance the visitor understanding of the events that took place 100 years ago and ensure these stories are not lost.

The Federal Government has committed \$10,000 through its Anzac Centenary Community Grants program to the commemorative event, as well as significant resources on the day with the Federation Guard and RAN Band being on hand to add appropriate military pomp and precision.

The Mornington Peninsula Shire Council has also pledged \$20,000 to support the event, which is being organised by the First Shot Committee. The committee comprises representatives of all three levels of government and the Sorrento Portsea RSL, and is headed by Major Bernie Gaynor of the ADF.

This event will be among the first of many commemorations to be held around the world in those countries that comprised the former British Empire.

It will be a fitting tribute to the prompt, decisive and effective action that was taken to prevent the *Pfalz* from escaping.

All of the military personnel involved on that day performed their duties commendably. None would have had any idea then how irrevocably the world had changed, even as the echoes of their fateful shot reverberated through their remote coastal artillery fortification.

The event will also see the launch of a campaign to restore the gun to full working order and we will be seeking philanthropic, community and business support for this.

At the same time, the Long Shot project will be working to find the original shell that was fired in 1914. It is hoped the original shell will go on display at Point Nepean alongside the gun.

We hope to have the gun completed by Armistice Day 2018 for future commemorative and community events.

The free, public event will commence at 11am on Tuesday, 5th August. The program of events includes the firing of an artillery howitzer, as well as the chance to view the site of the first shot and experience the enhanced interpretation facilities.

Visitors will be able to travel from the Quarantine Station to Fort Nepean by free shuttle bus from midday. Spaces are limited so those planning to attend are encouraged to register at the event's website: www.thefirstshot.com.au

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