



Doug Parkinson, MLC

Leader for the Government in the
Legislative Council

Friday, 20 April 2007

Frank MacDonald Prize winners begin pilgrimage to Gallipoli

Six Tasmanian students tomorrow begin a 12-day journey as Frank MacDonald Memorial Prize winners that will take them to the battlegrounds of France, Belgium and Turkey, including Gallipoli on Anzac Day.

Government Leader in the Legislative Council, Doug Parkinson, will lead the delegation, which also includes three RSL representatives and two teachers (delegation list follows).

Mr Parkinson said the six winning students' entries were selected from 176 essays or audio visual presentations produced about the Anzac spirit.

"Through a partnership between the State Government and the RSL, the Frank MacDonald Memorial Prize ensures that our students will continue to honour Frank MacDonald and recognise the importance of Gallipoli and other battles in our nation's history," Mr Parkinson said.

Mr Parkinson said the trip was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for the students to see first-hand where Australian soldiers fought and to ensure the sacrifices made by previous generations of Australians were not forgotten.

"Gallipoli is a defining moment in Australia's history and I'm proud to lead this delegation of six fine young Tasmanians to the Dawn Service at Anzac Cove and the Australian ceremony at Lone Pine," Mr Parkinson said.

"Latrobe High School's Casey Turner will read a passage from the Bible at the Lone Pine service on ANZAC Day and all of the students will lay a wreath at both Lone Pine and the Menin Gate in Belgium and the arc de Triumphe in Paris.

"The delegation will visit various points of the World War 1 battlefield in France, including Villers Brettoneux where Tasmanian Lieutenant Alfred Gaby obtained his Victoria Cross."

Mr Parkinson said Tasmanians played a huge part in World War 1, with 15,500 Tasmanians enlisting and 2,432 losing their lives.

"Frank MacDonald was our last World War I veteran when he died in 2003 at the age of 107.

"He proved his bravery and loyalty to Australia by fighting with distinction in France

and Belgium between 1916-1918 and was awarded the Military Medal for Conspicuous Gallantry and Devotion to Duty in October 1917.

“He was a decorated serviceman, having been awarded the Legion of Honour by the French Government for the courage he displayed on French soil.”

Mr Parkinson said the nation’s baptism of fire at Gallipoli came only 14 years after Australia became an independent nation.

“The sacrifice, bravery and mateship the Anzacs first showed at Gallipoli are at the foundation of Australia’s identity.

“The Anzac spirit that helped define our nation lives on today.”

*· Delegation members are flying out of Launceston and Hobart tomorrow. Those flying from Launceston – indicated by * – will be available for interview at Launceston Airport from 2.45-3.30pm. Contact teacher Peter Stanley (0417 150 759) or RSL representative Geoff Mainwaring (0417 593 705) to arrange.*

FRANK MACDONALD PRIZE DELEGATION

Students

Matthew Hennessy, MacKillop College

Nicholas Jones, Kings Meadows High School*

Michael Latten, Trinity College*

Casey Turner, Latrobe High School*

Tom Vautier, Launceston Church Grammar School*

Kathryn Willis, Yolla District High School*

Teachers

Peter Stanley, Triabunna District High School*

Lorraine Davidson, New Town High School

RSL representatives

RSL Tasmania President Tony Scott

Geoff Mainwaring*

Peter Harley*

Further information: Shaun Rigby on 0438021936