



## **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**

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### **73 YEARS SINCE VICTORY IN THE PACIFIC**

TODAY Australia acknowledges Victory in the Pacific Day, commemorating 73 years since the end of the Second World War. While Victory in Europe was declared in May 1945, fighting in the Pacific region continued until August 1945.

Minister for Veterans' Affairs Darren Chester said Victory in the Pacific Day marks the anniversary of Japan's unconditional surrender to the Allies after more than three years of war.

"During the Second World War almost 40,000 Australians lost their lives, including more than 17,000 in the war against Japan — some 8,000 of these died in Japanese captivity," Mr Chester said.

"We owe those men and women a great debt of gratitude and we will never forget.

"I encourage all Australians to reflect and remember the almost one million Australian men and women who served during the Second World War and particularly those who served in the Pacific against Japan."

In the early months of 1941, in the war against Japan, some 22,000 Australians were taken prisoner and endured a three and a half year battle to survive in prisoner of war camps across Asia, including those that provided labour to the Thai–Burma railway.

"On Tuesday, 16 October 2018, a service will be held in Ballarat, Victoria to commemorate the completion of the Thai–Burma Railway and 75th anniversary of the construction of its most infamous section, Hellfire Pass," Mr Chester said.

"This commemoration will honour the more than 2,800 Australians who lost their lives as prisoners of war working on the railway.

"I encourage all Australians to attend this service, hear the stories of those held prisoner by the Japanese and honour the sacrifice of all those who lost their lives as prisoners of war in the Pacific."

**ENDS**

#### **MEDIA CONTACTS:**

**Whil Prendergast: 02 6277 7820**

**DVA Media: 02 6289 6466**

**Office of the Hon. Darren Chester MP, Canberra.**

*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.*