



## **Australian Embassy to Belgium**



### **Last Post Association Ieper**

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#### **Australia and Last Post Association Ieper congratulate Mr Benoit Mottrie on Order of Australia Award**

The Australian government and the Last Post Association extend their warmest congratulations to Mr Benoit Mottrie, Chairman of the Last Post Association, who today was awarded an honorary medal in the Order of Australia.

This award recognises Mr Mottrie's significant service to Australia-Belgium relations.

Since 1990, Mr Mottrie has been a committee member of the Last Post Association, a volunteer group founded in Ieper (Ypres) more than 80 years ago that manages the nightly ceremony at the Menin Gate memorial. The memorial records the names of 54,393 soldiers of the then British Empire armies who died in the fighting around Ieper during the First World War and who have no known grave. The names of 6,190 Australians – a little under half the Australians killed in those terrible battles – are listed on the Menin Gate.

Benoit Mottrie has been the Association's Chairman since 2006 – and earlier this month marked exactly ten years since he started in the role. Over this period he has been the master of ceremonies at the nightly ceremony, overseeing the provision of buglers and ushers, coordinating performances by visiting bands and choirs and arranging the participation of dignitaries from around the world. Tens of thousands of Australians have witnessed the moving and powerful ceremonies at which Mr Mottrie has presided. He has frequently arranged the involvement in Last Post ceremonies of Australian ministers, and, on two occasions, of the Governor General of Australia.

Mr Mottrie has previously been recognised for his magnificent service to First World War commemoration. He is a Commander of Belgium's Order of Leopold II and last year he was made an honorary member of the New Zealand Order of Merit.

Mr Mottrie is a strong supporter of Australia-Belgium commemorative events, and he has been instrumental in a number of reburial and re-dedication ceremonies for Australian soldiers killed in Belgian Flanders. Over his years of service to the Last Post Association, Mr Mottrie has supported and facilitated many visiting Australian delegations, groups and families. In recent years he has also led two highly successful visits to Australia by Last Post Buglers, where they supported numerous community and commemorative events, including at the Australian War Memorial in Canberra. Mr Mottrie has helped facilitate plans to return the Menin Lions to Ieper for one year in 2017 to commemorate the Battle of Passchendaele.

Senator the Hon Mathias Cormann, the Australian Minister for Finance and Special Minister of State – who is leading Australian commemoration of this year’s ANZAC Day in Belgium – presided over the ceremony in Ieper at which Mr Mottrie was presented with the award. He said ‘the government and people of Australia thank you and the Last Post Association most sincerely for your dedication, care and commitment to ensuring the courage and sacrifice of Australian soldiers on Belgian soil in World War I continue to be remembered.’ The Minister said Mr Mottrie’s role had been entirely voluntary, that he had performed his role with command and dignity and that he was a fine representative of the warmth and long-standing friendship of the peoples of Australia and Belgium.