BATTLE OF KOKODA REMEMBERED 70 YEARS ON

Australian servicemen and women who fought and died in the Battle of Kokoda that ended in victory 70 years ago were saluted by Minister for Citizenship and Communities Victor Dominello at a Flag Raising ceremony in Sydney today.

Six men who were part of the Australian forces that fought in the Papuan Campaign, including the battle that halted the Japanese advance on Port Moresby, were part of the 300-strong crowd at the Kokoda Track Memorial Walkway at Concord.

The Battle of Kokoda was a four-month struggle across the rugged Owen Stanley Ranges that began with the Japanese landing at Gona, on the country’s north coast, in July 21 1942.

On 2 November Australian forces recaptured the village of Kokoda, which had fallen to the Japanese on 29 July. On 3 November an Australia flag raising ceremony was held in the village to mark the occasion.

“The campaign in Papua on the Kokoda Trail, in the second half of 1942, brought the Second World War to Australia’s doorstep,” Mr Dominello said.

“More than 600 Australians were killed along the Kokoda Trail and about 1,600 were wounded. Casualties due to sickness exceeded 4,000.”

Mr Dominello said those who fought at Kokoda came from a range of cultural backgrounds including Aboriginal soldiers.

In conjunction with the flag raising ceremony, a plaque dedicated to the memory of Aboriginal servicemen and women who fought in the Battle of Kokoda will be unveiled.

“Then, as now, the Anzac was a unifying symbol, an inspirational figure whose story continues to unite Australians, regardless of their backgrounds,” Mr Dominello said.

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