



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

6 November 2018

NEW LIONS UNVEILED AT THE MENIN GATE IN IEPER

NEW Menin Gate lions are now a permanent fixture on the plinths in front of the Menin Gate Memorial, as the Australian Government's gift to the city of Ieper (Ypres) was unveiled today.

The Minister for Veterans' Affairs Darren Chester said Australia and the city of Ieper, which was accepting the gift on behalf of the Belgian people, have a special connection that was forged some 100 years ago, as demonstrated by the Menin Gate and its lions.

The new lions were a gift from the Australian Government, with the originals given to the Australian Government by the city of Ieper in 1936 as an expression of gratitude for the ultimate sacrifice made by more than 13,000 Australian soldiers in Belgium. The originals are now at the Australian War Memorial in Canberra, following some restoration work, for all Australians and visitors to see.

"Our soldiers in their thousands once walked between these gates on route to the battlefields," Mr Chester said.

"It is with great pride that the Australian Government has the opportunity to unveil these new lions today, a special gift and lasting reminder of our appreciation for the city in never forgetting Australia's sacrifice."

During the First World War more than 13,000 Australians made the ultimate sacrifice in Belgium. The Menin Gate memorial now bears the names of more than 6,000 of them who have no known grave.

The lions are perfect replicas of the originals, using the same stone and carved by local Belgian stonemasons. They have taken more than 1300 hours to carve, including over 500 hours by hand.

Mr Chester and the Mayor of Ieper signed an official agreement as part of the ceremony to finalise the gift from Australia.

"As the Anzac Centenary period draws to a close, commemorating 100 years since the First World War and its many battles, it is important that Australia never forgets the city of Ieper, just like they will never forget us," Mr Chester said.

Open Arms – Veterans and Families Counselling provides support for current and ex-serving ADF personnel and their families. Free and confidential help is available 24/7. Phone 1800 011 046 (international: +61 8 8241 4546) or visit www.OpenArms.gov.au

“As they do every single day of the year for the nightly Last Post service, the local community turned out in their hundreds for the special occasion.”

Images from the ceremony and the new lions will be made available on the [Defence image gallery](#).

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