

Friday, 7 December, 2007

PREMIER HONOURS THOSE WHO SERVED IN THE PACIFIC

Premier John Brumby today joined US Consul General John Irving, ex-servicemen from America and Australia and the cast and crew of the television production *The Pacific* to mark Pearl Harbour Day, the anniversary of war beginning in the Pacific.

During a service at the Shrine of Remembrance, Mr Brumby said the war in the Pacific - which began when Japan bombed Pearl Harbour and attacked Australian forces in Malaya - was an important chapter in Australian-US relations.

"It was from this day more than 60 years ago, that America and Australia stood side by side in defence of Australia, Asia and Europe through World War II," Mr Brumby said.

"It is important to remember that victory over Japan was a joint effort, as called for by Prime Minister John Curtin.

"Today we honour those who gave service in that defence, and especially remember the thousands of Americans who passed through Melbourne on their way to war."

Mr Brumby said some 100,000 Americans passed through Melbourne in 1942, and the city and its people made a lasting impression on many of them.

"Many Americans visited Melbourne on R&R during the war, and some returned here permanently after the war," Mr Brumby said.

"Today, the American Ex-Serviceman's Association is an established part of Australia's military legacy and it is overdue that their contribution is recognised at the Shrine of Remembrance.

"It is a story that should be better known - by Australians and Americans."

Minister for Innovation, Gavin Jennings said the historical events of World War II were being recreated in the television production *The Pacific*, currently filming in Victoria.

"This 10 part miniseries, produced by Home Box Office (HBO), Stephen Spielberg, Gary Goetzman and Tom Hanks, will capture the historical and human events of 1942," he said.

"Every serviceman who passed through Melbourne has a story to tell, and through *The Pacific*, audiences will soon have a window on this chapter of history.

"The series tells the story of a small group of Americans fighting from Guadalcanal through to Iwo Jima, and has significant Australian content, especially featuring Melbourne."

Mr Jennings said filming of *The Pacific* in Victoria was the biggest television production to ever be made in Australia, expected to generate \$180-million for the Victorian economy and create approximately 4,000 job opportunities.

"In addition to commemorating Australian and American military history, *The Pacific* will make a significant contribution to Victoria's film industry and economy," he said.

Mr Brumby and Mr Irving laid wreaths and unveiled a plaque honouring the American sacrifice.