



## Premier of Western Australia

### MESSAGE FROM HON COLIN BARNETT MLA PREMIER OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA

This year marks the 113<sup>th</sup> anniversary since the Treaty of Vereeniging, which brought an end to the Boer War.

Following the outbreak of war, the Western Australian Contingent was the first to directly arrive from Australia to assist the British. When they departed our shores Western Australia was still a colony. When they returned home after the war's conclusion Western Australia had become a state in the newly formed Commonwealth of Australia

During the course of the Boer War a total of six contingents embarked from Western Australia. Later, following Federation, a further three Western Australian Battalions formed part of the wider Commonwealth of Australia contingent. Ultimately over 900 men served from Western Australia. Sadly more than 30 died in action, of wounds or from disease.

The conditions in South Africa were harsh and challenging, and the British found the Australian presence a welcome sight. As the environment was similar to that of Australia, the 'colonial' bushmen made good horsemen and mounted soldiers.

Western Australia's first Victoria Cross was awarded during the Boer War. Frederick Bell, who had been working at the Western Australian Customs Department at the war's outbreak, had enlisted in October 1899 in the 1st West Australian (Mounted Infantry) Contingent. According to his Victoria Cross citation *"at Brakpan on the 16<sup>th</sup> May 1901, when retiring through a heavy fire after holding the right flank, Lieutenant Bell noticed a man dismounted and returned and took him up behind him. The horse not being equal to the weight fell with them, Lieutenant Bell then remained behind and covered the man's retirement till he was out of danger."*

This year we commemorate the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Gallipoli campaign. It is therefore fitting to also remember that before the Great War, there was the Boer War, and it was the first conflict which Australians fought in under the banner of a unified country. Later, many who served in the Boer War would see action on the Western Front and other theatres of the Great War.

I commend the National Boer War Association for their enduring dedication and enthusiasm in ensuring that the Boer War doesn't fade from the national conscious.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Colin Barnett'.

Hon Colin Barnett MLA  
**PREMIER**