



Shrapnel wound: Cpl Robert Green was unable to escape the German advance.



Mateship: Lance-Cpl Allan Bennett died trying to help his good friend.

Mateship tale emerges from beyond the grave

JOSEPH CATANZARO

It was the bloodiest 24 hours in Australian military history but 94 years after the battle of Fromelles, the conclusion to a quintessential tale of Australian heroism and mateship has emerged from that nightmarish field — unearthed with the remains of a handful of WA soldiers.

The Department of Defence said yesterday that DNA testing had confirmed the identities of eight WA soldiers exhumed from a mass grave near Pheasant Wood in France last year.

Among them were Cpl Robert Green and Lance-Cpl Allan Bennett, mates who enlisted together after the outbreak of World War I.

For the descendants of Lance-Cpl Bennett, who records and letters show died trying to save his friend Cpl Green, the announcement has provided a poignant ending to an unfinished tale of friendship.

The two men, who had fought and died together, shared a shallow grave through the long years.

It was July 19, 1916, and the 32nd



Never forgotten: From left, Pte Gilbert Allen Griffiths, Pte Edward Nason Burney, Pte Samuel Thomas James Ridler and Pte Arnold Holmes.

Battalion was assaulting the German front line when Cpl Green was wounded by shrapnel. Lance-Cpl Bennett and another soldier ran to the aid of their fallen mate — but their retreat was cut off by a rain of artillery.

With nowhere else to go, they dragged Cpl Green through no-man's-land towards the fighting. In their desperate dash, Lance-Cpl Bennett was raked by machinegun fire, which killed the other soldier helping.

Despite his wounds, Lance-Cpl Bennett dragged himself and Cpl Green into the unforgiving shelter of a captured enemy trench. The last

known whereabouts of the men, recorded by a survivor of the battle in a letter sent to the Bennett family, had them lying side-by-side at the bottom of the trench where they had sought refuge, mortally wounded and unable to escape the German advance.

Lance-Cpl Bennett's great-nephew, Gidgegannup resident Peter Thomson, said yesterday that it was comforting to know the two friends had remained united in death.

"It was kind of moving really, because it was a story about mateship and loyalty," he said. "Rather than running for safety, he helped his

buddy. It is nice to think they had that continuing connection in death."

The Joint Identification Board charged with identifying the remains found in the mass grave identified 75 Australian soldiers yesterday.

The other six West Australians are Pte Robert Grieve Moncrieff Scott, Cpl Leslie William Hart, Pte Samuel Thomas James Ridler, Pte Arnold Holmes, Pte Gilbert Allen Griffiths and Pte Edward Nason Burney.

Of the 250 bodies exhumed, 203 have been identified as Australians. A further 12 WA soldiers are thought to be among the 128 Australians yet to be identified. It is believed more names will be released in May when the board meets again.



'Clean up' call to Aboriginals

ROBERT TAYLOR

Premier Colin Barnett has told Aboriginals to take more responsibility for keeping their publicly-funded homes clean and tidy.

Speaking after an official report highlighted appalling living conditions in Roebourne, Mr Barnett said the community was prepared to do more to improve Aboriginals' lives but there was an expectation for "Aboriginal people to meet the wider community halfway".

The Premier said that during a recent trip to Roebourne he could see "people sitting around on their verandas while the front of their house was just covered with rubbish blowing around in the wind".

DJs celebrates \$100m profit

RACHEL DONKIN

David Jones has thanked its customers for driving it to a record first-half result after the upmarket retailer reported a 10 per cent increase in profit to \$100.5 million.

Chief executive Mark McInnes said the company's international portfolio of women's brands had helped fuel customer demand during the first half of 2009-10, which included the all-important Christmas trading period.

Although smaller than Myer, David Jones is regarded as a better-performing business. It also lured leading brands from Myer in recent months, including Carla Zampatti.

> MORE BUSINESS

41-44

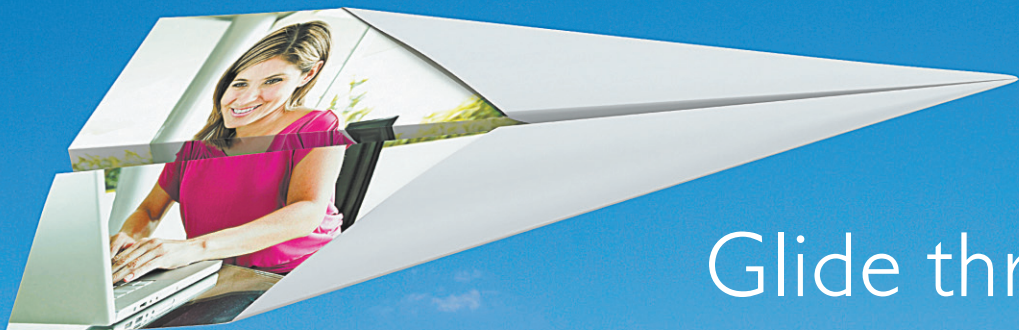
Hoon changes a step closer

DANIEL EMERSON

Changes to the Government's hoon legislation aimed at preventing a repeat of the yellow Lamborghini case passed through the Lower House of State Parliament last night.

Police Minister Rob Johnson said the laws needed to be changed after a Perth GP had his Lamborghini sports car impounded for 28 days in January because his mechanic was allegedly caught speeding in it.

Mr Johnson refused to agree to additional amendments proposed by the Opposition preventing taxi owners or small business owners having their cars impounded if lessees or employees were caught hooning.



Glide through the terminal
with online check-in.



Online check-in allows you to print your boarding pass for your Qantas flight from the comfort of your home or office — making your journey through the airport more of a breeze. That's the spirit. **The Spirit of Australia.**

qantas.com

