



21th December 2016

The Secretary
The Treasury
Government of Australia

Dear Sir

Budget Submission – Charles Bean School, Pozieres

Thank you for the opportunity to make this Pre-budget Submission in relation to the proposed Charles Bean Memorial School project.

In summary this submission seeks:

- \$2 million AUD, to be matched by private sector contributions.
- Deductible Gift Certificate status.

Background

The Pozieres French Australian School project commenced in 2012, with the expressed purpose of commemorating the battle in which 7000 Australians lost their lives with a meaningful and lasting contribution to the people of the region. In consultation with local authorities, the need for a new primary school was identified. The current school (which replaced the school destroyed in the battle) has outlived its usefulness, particularly in relation to access.

The company Australians at Pozieres Ltd was formed to drive the project, and has as its Patron the Governor of NSW, the Hon David Hurley AC DSC. The Founder and Chairman of the project is Historian Will Davies, the Deputy Chairman is Mr John McColl, a Senior Corporate Banker with BNP and the Company Secretary is corporate adviser James Mitchell. Full details of the company's corporate governance and biographies of its Board and listings of its ambassadors are in the attached brief.

Current Position

The project has the support of the French Government, in particular the Department of Education and the local municipality. These authorities will be contributing 40% of the costs of the estimated 4 million Euro budget. Of the remaining 60% (\$4 Million AUD), \$2million is sought in contribution from the Australian Government and the balance is being raised from community and private sector contributions. The company is currently in the process of obtaining the Deductible Gift Certificate status.

Representatives of the company have met with the offices of the Minister for Defence and the Minister for Veterans Affairs.

Discussion

The Australian Government has funded the construction of significant monuments to commemorate the centennial anniversary of Australian sacrifice in the defence of France in WWI, in particular the Sir John Monash Centre at Villers Bretonneau. In keeping with the importance of the events in Australian history these monuments are of appropriately large scale and cost.

The Charles Bean School at Pozieres is a different, but complimentary contribution to the joint Australian/French narrative about our shared sacrifice in the Great War. Firstly, it is of a far more modest scale than the historical commemorative monuments. Secondly it is driven by a community based, voluntary effort both in France and in Australia. Third, in having a sustainable purpose- that of educating children - it seeks to commemorate the tragedy and sacrifice of war by contributing to the peaceful development of future generations. Finally, it seeks to ensure the deep bonds forged on the battlefield between Australia and France are cemented and perpetuated across future generations.

We would welcome the opportunity to discuss this further. We can say with certainty that this very modest contribution sought from the Australian Government will leverage significant private sector support. For further details, please see the attached Background Briefing.

Regards,

Will Davies
Chairman

Contact

Will Davies 0411 725 847 will@pozieres.org.au

Pozières French Australian School Project



THE CHARLES BEAN SCHOOL **BACKGROUND BRIEFING**

(15th November 2016)

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This *Background Briefing* Paper outlines the proposal for the construction of a new school including classrooms and amenities to accommodate up to 130 students in the French village of Pozières. The project was officially launched by His Excellency General The Honourable David Hurley AC DSC (Ret'd), Governor of NSW in late May 2015. A commemorative plaque was unveiled during the 100th anniversary events, 23-24 July 2016 and to officially open the school on the 23 July 2018 as part of the commemoration of the Battle of Pozières. A primary aim of the project since its inception in 2012 has been to reinforce the memory of Australian casualties of the battle, to provide an enduring legacy in the village for local children to have a connection with Australia and to offer the local school children the opportunity to have a bi-lingual education with an Australian focus.

While the funding for the project will come from a range of sponsors and support organisations, initial funds were raised through the donations of school children with a Gold Coin Day on the 11th November 2015. Of the anticipated cost of 4 million euros (AUD\$6.15 million), 40% will be covered by French subsidy leaving 60% or 2.4 million euros (AUD\$4 million) to be raised in Australia. In this regard, we are working with corporate sponsors, French companies in Australia, prominent business people, schools, clubs and social organisations to fully fund the project. A trust account has been established at Westpac and monies raised will be directly deposited into this account.

In April 2016, a site visit was undertaken by three members of the Board: Will Davies, John McColl and James Mitchell. Meetings were held in Pozières with the village Mayor, Bernard Delattre, in Albert, and in the regional city of Amiens. Following this, meetings were also held in Paris with a range of French government departments including Education, Veterans Affairs, Legion of Honour, a member of the Senate and other dignitaries and with the Australian Ambassador to France, Mr Stephen Brady.

Following discussions with the local member for the area in the Assembly and the French Education Department, the Charles Bean School will be a pilot programme for the introduction of bi-lingual (French-English) education across France. This is a major initiative, splitting the project into two halves: one the

physical building of the school and the second, the bi-lingual education initiative and its cultural and educational outcomes.

Also following the site visit, and understanding French requirements and building regulations with respect architectural and design aspects, the Board is working with Mr Richard Johnson, who oversaw the Sydney Opera House modifications, designed the Anzac Hall at the Australian War Memorial and the extension of the Anzac Memorial in Hyde Park. Parallel to this, a local French based architect will also be engaged to ensure that local building standards and requirements are addressed. The schedule for design, site preparation and construction is approximately two years. Construction will begin in mid-2017 with completion early 2018, ready for the official opening in July 2018.

To satisfy probity, a suitable legal structure has been established by Mr David Heidtman, a Principal of McPherson Kelley Lawyers, a leading national law firm and Mr James Winter, a Partner in Grant Thornton. *Australians at Pozières Limited* (ACN 605 302 663) is a company limited by guarantee and is now a registered charity to manage fundraising. For this purpose, a fundraising account has been set up under suitable and approved accounting and audit practices, to oversee the construction of the School to completion.



1st Australian Division Memorial, Pozières

THE HISTORY

This tiny French village has a very special place in Australian history and the nation's memory. The battle of Pozières ran from the 23 July into early September 1916. In the weeks prior to the battle, British artillery had reduced the village to ruins and after a number of unsuccessful and bloody attacks on the German fortified second line as part of the massive Battle of the Somme offensive which started on the 1 July 1916, the Australians were ordered to attack. They went in on the night of the 23 July, captured the blockhouse known as "Gibraltar" and although they drove the Germans out, were subjected to massive and continuous artillery fire over the following days. After fierce fighting, they pushed through the village to the high ground known as the Windmill and then wheeled to attack the fortified Mouquet Farm.

The school of course was lost in this battle. After six desperate weeks of fighting and massive losses on both sides, the fighting ended with the Australians in possession of the plateau north and east of the village and in a position to menace the German bastion of Thiepval from the rear.

However, the cost had been enormous with 23,000 Australian casualties in the first six weeks and by the time they withdrew, nearly 7,000 were dead with two-thirds having no known grave. In the words of Australian official historian Charles Bean, the Pozières ridge "*was captured on August 4th by Australian troops who fell more thickly on this ridge than on any other battlefield of the war.*"

The French Minister of Defence, stated that the engagement at Pozières was "*the only Allied success in the entire battle of the Somme*".

In 1925, the school (*Ecole*) was rebuilt and included as part of the *Mairie* – the village Town Hall, taking up the ground floor where it remains today. However, as disabled access is now required by the Mayor (*Monsieur Le Maire*) and the Town Hall, the school must move and find alternate accommodation.

This is where we come in.



THE PRIMARY SCHOOL PROPOSAL

The proposal is to build a new primary school with seven classrooms, a teachers' common room, a small library, toilets and other facilities. It has been suggested that each classroom represents a geographical region of Australia through the timber used. For example, the rainforest timbers of far north of Queensland, the Jarrah or Karri of Western Australia, the timbers of South Australia, Victoria or Tasmania. Local unique timber from these areas would be used for flooring and in various fittings, and the room might be decorated with pictures from each particular state. This gives a direct connection between parts of Australia and allows each state to actively contribute to the construction of the building.

It is proposed the primary school be built on 5000 square metres of land already allocated by the Pozières Council.



The Pozières School (Ecole) today on the ground floor beneath the Town Hall (Mairie)

At present the village has a one-room primary school located on the ground floor of the Mairie (Town Hall) and currently provides education facilities for around 30 students. Erected ninety years ago, it has seen better days. The building has old floors in poor condition and the teachers and children have almost no modern facilities, relying on blackboards and chalk. Even with a significant renovation, it is difficult to envisage the existing school having the capability to support the electrical upgrade needed to provide what we in Australia would consider necessary tools for the education of children. The toilets for the school are located 50 metres away from the main building. Last winter, Pozières had extreme snow and wet conditions so to be able to use the toilets, the children often had to walk through snow and ice, to a cold, open and aging facility.

Further to the Pozières Australia School Project, the local and national education authorities are now preparing, with the support of the Mayor of Pozieres, to consolidate small unsustainable village schools, some only a few kilometres away, into a modern central school. These might include the communities of Contalmaison, Martinpuich, La Boisselle, Thiepval and Bazentin, all small villages very familiar to Australian troops during the First World War. These villages contain the war graves of Australians and this area is also the final resting place of many Australians with no known grave and today remembered on the walls of the National Memorial at Villers Bretonneau.

There is also the possibility of building on the first floor, accommodation with two dormitories or bunk rooms, teachers' rooms, a breakfast room, small kitchen, showers and toilets. This would provide accommodation for visiting Australian school groups who could make Pozières the centre of their Western Front visit and facilitate engagement with the children of Pozières and surrounding villages in the broader Somme valley including the regional city of Amiens and nearby Albert.

It is hoped to build an Australian "looking" primary school, perhaps something with the feel of rural Australia. However, what is most important, is that this School reflects a vision of Australia and the legacy for the Australians who died and rest there today. And in its classrooms, a bi-lingual curriculum might be taught with a particular emphasis on "things Australian".

A TRULY FRENCH-AUSTRALIAN SCHOOL

After meetings in Paris with French parliamentary representatives and officials from the Department of Education, it was agreed to sign an “Administrative Agreement” between the French and Australian governments for the establishment of a bi-lingual primary school curriculum, based on a similar agreement with the French New Caledonian administration. This agreement will form the basis for a similar arrangement for the Pozières School, the model being offered by the French Embassy in Canberra, and opens the way for the first bi-lingual curriculum in France, to be introduced over the next ten years. Our school in Pozières will be the ‘pilot’ school with students going on to the high school in the nearby town of Albert.

As part of the broader initiative, it is hoped that a regular teacher exchange between the Somme region and a suitable Australian school might allow teachers also to gain cross-cultural experiences in a similar way to students. An Australian teacher within the school might work across all classes from kindergarten to Year 6 teaching the following:

- English language as a second language
- Australian songs and poems
- Australian geography and history
- Aboriginal and Torres Straits culture, art and dance
- Show Australian films, particularly documentaries
- Australian art through paintings and photographs
- Australian wildlife and environment
- Australian sport and popular culture
- And uniquely Australian activities and pastimes.

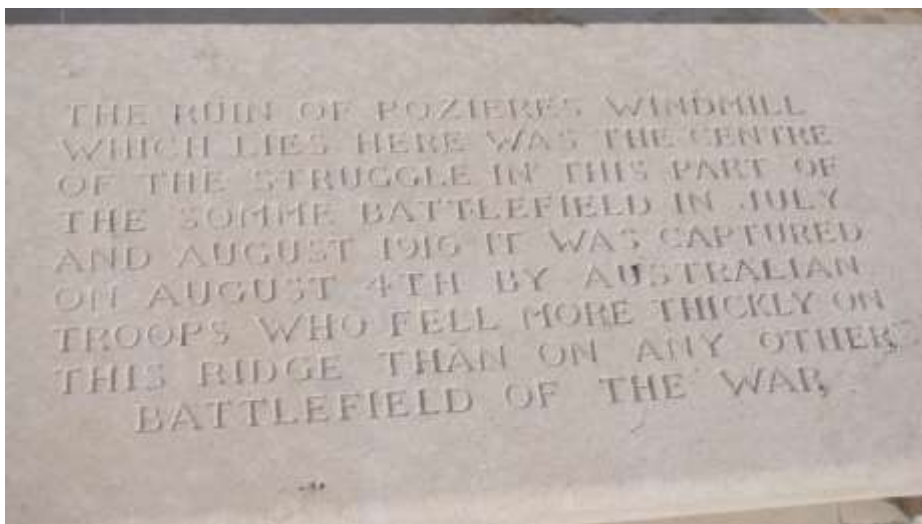
An Education Treaty has been draft by the French Education Department and the French Embassy in Canberra and counter-signed by the French Ambassador and the Australian Federal Minister of Education, Simon Birmingham.

THE ESTIMATED COST

Suffice to say, an accurate costing has not yet been prepared for the construction and equipping of the School. This can only be completed after the plans have been finalised and approved. There are also some costly elements unusual in the building of a school. Prior to any work being done, an extensive archaeological survey must take place. This is to ensure that any bodies remaining on the site are carefully and respectfully removed for later identification. Being a battlefield, there may well be remaining trench lines and other features that might be retained and incorporated into the building, (for example beneath a glass floor) and no doubt dangerous ordnance (unexploded shells etc.) which will most likely be in the ground. Just clearing and retaining the historical significance of the site will be a costly yet important stage in the construction period and one that must be allowed for in the construction budget.

However, on the basis of an initial estimate provided by the French authorities, the full cost of construction of the school will be 4 million euros. The French construction company Bouygues (the company awarded the contract to build the nearby Sir John Monash Centre in Villers Bretonneau) has done a costing and agrees with this figure.

Australia will contribute 60% or 2.5 million Euros which is, depending upon the fluctuating exchange rate, some AUD\$4 million.



The real cost: 23,000 Australian casualties in six weeks of fighting.

THE SCHEDULE

As with the final cost estimate, the schedule to completion has not been finalised. This will need to be finalised after funding has been confirmed, the plans have been completed and the French authorities involved. However, an initial plan is as follows:

January- December 2016

- * Follow-up work with French authorities
- * Unveiling commemorative plaque at Pozières
- * Initial approaches to corporate sponsors
- * Finalise DGR status (tax exemption)
- * Start work on School plans

May 2017 * Building starts

April 2018 * Building completed

July 2018 * School dedicated and opened

CORPORATE UNDERWRITING AND SPONSORSHIP

Negotiations are being finalised to obtain Deductible Gift Recipient (DGR), or tax deductible status, to allow private donors to receive a tax deduction for their donations to the Project. It is anticipated that the funding will come from government sources, corporate sponsors, multinational companies, clubs (including sports clubs), RSLs, social groups, individual schools across the state, interested organisations and generous individuals.

It is hoped to secure a corporate underwriting agreement in late 2016. Seed funding, is also being raised, to cover the cost of legal work, architectural designs, site inspections, including travel and liaison with the French authorities. In this regard, contact has been made with a large potential sponsor to provide both underwriting and start-up funding and an approach has been made to the NSW Premier for funding.

The French liaison work will be undertaken by Mr John McColl, a Director of the Company and a French national with dual French-Australian citizenship.

Companies, corporate entities and private individuals donating over AUD\$1,000 will be listed on a commemorative plaque within the School precinct.

THE BOARD OF THE COMPANY

PATRON: His Excellency General The Honourable David Hurley AC DSC,
Governor of New South Wales

VICE PATRON: Major General Gordon Maitland AO, OBE, RFD, ED, (RL)

THE BOARD:

Will Davies BA – Founder and Chairman

Long-time documentary producer of major television series, principally to the ABC and SBS including WHEN THE WAR CAME TO AUSTRALIA, TALES FROM A SUITCASE and the major Channel 9 series OUR CENTURY. He is an historian and the author of eight books including *Somme Mud* (editor), *Beneath Hill 60* and *The Boy Colonel*. Currently Will is an Ambassador on the NSW Centenary of Anzac Advisory Council chaired by Lieutenant General Ken Gillespie AC, DSC, CSM and part of the publications committee for the NSW history of the Great War. As part of his work as a battlefield historian and tour guide, he has recently overseen the twinning and sister-city relationship between the Councils of Pozières and Ku-ring-gai and is working on a range of Anzac commemorative projects while completing a PhD at ANU.

John MacColl OAM – Deputy Chairman

John MacColl is a former elected member of the Assemblée des Français de l'Étranger (AFE) in Paris, representing Australia, New Zealand and the South Pacific area; President of the Education, Culture and Information Commission of AFE and member of its permanent bureau in Paris; Treasurer and Board member of the Association Nationale des Ecoles Françaises à l'Étranger (National Association of French Schools Abroad) in Paris; Senior Corporate Banker with the Banque Nationale de Paris (BNP) responsible for the promotion of French investments and the establishment of French companies in Australia. Was also Chief Representative of Banque Transatlantique (The "French Diplomats Bank"); Advisor to the French Government on Trade

(Conseiller du Commerce Extérieur de la France); currently John is on the Corporate Council of the European Australian Business Council (EABC), serving seven years as a Board member.

James Scott Mitchell - Company Secretary

James Scott Mitchell is based in Sydney, with over 30 years senior management experience in project development, financing, consulting and strategic marketing, public affairs and obtaining results. James is currently a Principal and Executive Director of a new international capital management and commodity-trading company with extensive experience in China, Japan, South Korea, West Africa, Western Europe, Middle East and North and South America and Indonesia. He is also Chairman, Allanbank International, which was established in 1991 to source, develop and finance through tax-effective structured investments, disruptive innovative technologies/products across a range of industries including films and television programmes and commercialising intellectual property. James achieved significant success with investments into the film business. James is a former Director, Co-Founder of Goldstream Capital Group Pty Ltd, a specialist financial product development and corporate advisory house. The company developed and advised on capital-protected alternative investment funds for wholesale and retail distribution channels for major Australian banks such as Westpac, Macquarie Bank, Rothschild and ANZ. He is currently slowly finalising a PhD research project on the role of entrepreneurs as the essential agents of change in the creative industries which have their origin in individual creativity, skill and talent and which have the potential for wealth creation through the generation and exploitation of intellectual property.

Mr Andrew Stokes – Board Member

Andrew is currently a senior executive with Origin Energy and the Head of Finance on the Board.

Andrew Stokes is a Finance and Information Technology professional having held senior leadership positions in both the Commonwealth Bank and Origin Energy IT organisations. His specialisation is the management of the financial and commercial aspects associated with a large corporate IT organizations with a particular emphasis on cost reduction through IT Cost transparency via

Business Unit recharge models, Software Asset Management, Telecommunications cost management and Project management and prioritisation. He holds a Bachelor of Business from University of Technology (Sydney), is currently in the final stages of his MBA (Technology) at the Australian Graduate School of Management (UNSW) and is a member of the Australian Society of Certified Practising Accountants and the Australian Computer Society. Previous charitable activities include One Laptop per Child, supporting the education of indigenous children in remote communities and Fighting Chance, an organisation that creates opportunities for people with disabilities. He is pleased to be involved in the Pozieres French Australian School Project as it represents tangible link between France and Australia benefiting that community in commemorating the soldiers who gave their lives at Pozieres. Andrew lives in Sydney, Australia.

ADVISORY BOARD

DAVID HEIDTMAN BA (UNSW) LLM (Syd) CTA

David was a partner in a well-regarded city law firm before he founded Heidtman & Co in 1983, which grew from a sole practitioner firm to over 115 people. David merged his Commercial practice with MacPherson and Kelley Lawyers in January 2012. He has experience in a broad range of commercial and financial areas including commercial agreements, film and entertainment and taxation and duties. David's clients include Australian and multinational public and private corporations, corporate executives, legal, accounting and other professionals, small to medium enterprises and business entrepreneurs. David has been a board member of listed and unlisted companies in Australia and overseas, spoken at seminars and to government advisory groups in Australia and abroad, and has written a number of publications on legal and commercial topics. David's qualifications and memberships include Master of Laws (LL.M); Bachelor of Laws (LL.B); Bachelor of Arts (B.A.) Barrister and Solicitor of the Supreme Court of New South Wales, Solicitor of the High Court of Australia, Notary Public, Chartered Tax Adviser, Fellow of the Taxation Institute of Australia, Fellow of the Australian Institute of Company Directors, Member of the Commercial Law Association of Australia, Member of the Law Council of Australia and a Member of the Inter-Pacific Bar Association. He is also a Major (Ret'd) in the Army Reserve.

JAMES WINTER

James Winter is an experienced Audit Partner with a major international accounting firm and is a specialist in advising not-for-profit and charitable organisations. James has an active involvement in community organisations and has served in local government, and as trustee and board member for a number of charities. James is an ex-serviceman having graduated from the Officer Cadet Training Unit (Army Reserve) and served as an officer in the Royal Australian Artillery. His family have a strong military heritage with his grandfather having

served in the Australian Army Medical Corps in France in 1918, his father serving in New Guinea in WWII, and James' two brothers and sister also having seen active service in recent conflicts with the Australian Army.

James is a churchwarden at the Anglican Church of Saint John the Evangelist, Gordon, which has a strong connection to Pozières as it holds the Colours of the 18th Battalion AIF and the Pozières Cross which was brought home with the Battalion after the War.

RICHARD JOHNSON AO, MBE B. Arch, M. Phil, F.RAIA, MDIA, AJIA

Professor Richard Johnson studied Architecture at the University of New South Wales, graduating with 1st Class Honours in 1969. He was admitted to the degree of Master of Philosophy following study in town planning and urban design at University College London. Richard has worked both nationally and internationally with his work varying from pavilions at world expos, to detailed museum and museum/gallery exhibition design, embassies, schools, office buildings, hotels and a range of master planning and urban design, landscape design and architectural projects in Australia and China - all involving exceptional design solutions. His interests are broadly spread from architecture and urban design to the design of museums and exhibitions. He is active in the professional and educational arenas and is a Professor of Architecture at the Faculty of Built Environment. He has been an active member of the Royal Australian Institute of Architects (RAIA), and has delivered many public lectures.

GENERAL STEVE GOWER AO

Major General **Stephen Newman "Steve" Gower AO AO (Mil)** (born 10 June 1940) is a retired Australian Army officer and former director of the Australian War Memorial (AWM). Educated at Unley High School and Prince Alfred College, he entered the Royal Military College, Duntroon in 1959. On graduation in 1961, he received a commission as a lieutenant in the Royal Australian Artillery. During his time in the Army he saw combat as an artillery forward observer during the Vietnam War in 1966 and 1967. He is also the author of the books *Guns of the Regiment* (1981) and *Options for an Australian*

Defence Technological Strategy (1982). He served as Director of the Australian War Memorial for sixteen years retiring in August 2012.

JIM FRECKLINGTON OAM

Jim Frecklington was born in 1949 in Parkes, NSW and is the maker of carriages. After working in the Arctic, he moved to England and was engaged at Windsor Castle and later moved to the Royal Mews in London caring for the Royal ceremonial horses and driving the carriages on ceremonial occasions. He also served as an outrider at Ascot. In 1977 he was invited to manage the Queen's Silver Jubilee Exhibition during its tour of Australia and following that built a replica of the Edward VII 1902 Landau. He then went on to build Queen Elizabeth's Australian State Coach which was presented to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II on the occasion of the Australian Bicentennial in 1988. A new British state coach constructed on Frecklington's initiative, the State Coach Britannia (also known as the Diamond Jubilee State Coach), was first used during the State Opening of Parliament in June 2014.

PAUL WHITE

Paul has over 40 years' experience in the construction and property industry. He spent most of this time with Concrete Constructions Group Limited, where he was Managing Director and Chairman until his retirement in 1998. In 1992, Paul was appointed to chair the government and industry jointly funded Construction Industry Development Agency. Paul has a Bachelor of Building degree from the University of New South Wales and is a fellow of the Institute of Company Directors. He is currently undertaking development projects and providing consulting services to the Artazan Property Group (APG), a Sydney based project management and property consultant. APG is a highly experienced team, offering a full suite of services across most property sectors for private and institutional clients.

Paul will provide pro bono managerial support and consultancy and oversee the building process through design, construction and liaison with the French builder.

AMBASSADORS

The Pozières French Australian School Project is honoured to have the support and inspiration of the following Ambassadors:

Warren Brown, Author, cartoonist and television presenter

Anne Carroll, OAM Grand-daughter of Charles Bean

Peter FitzSimons, AM, Author, journalist and broadcaster

Judge Judith Gibson, District Court of NSW

Lieutenant General Ken Gillespie, AC DSC CSM (re'td)

Dr Roger Lee, Official Historian, Australian War Memorial

Paul Kelly, Editor at Large, *The Australian*

Emeritus Prof Robert Ouvrier, AC MD BSc (Med) FRACP

Ray Martin, AM Journalist and television presenter

Chris Masters, PSM Television Journalist – ABC 4 Corners

Dr Brendan Nelson, AO Director, Australian War Memorial

Chris Smith, Radio presenter, 2GB

Peter Tyree (Hon PhD UNSW) Businessman and electrical engineer

Rhondda Vanzella OAM (President War Widows Guild)

Simon Westaway, Actor

Rod White, AM RFD National President of the RSL

LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS AND STRUCTURE

Key to the success of the fund raising is the establishment of a legally appropriate structure to undertake both the fund-raising and the execution of this Project.

To do this, the Board has called upon the services of David Heidtman LLM , a Principal of Macpherson Kelley Lawyers, a lawyer with over forty years' experience in establishing and advising companies, to provide legal services.

Also working on this process will be James Winter, a Partner of Grant Thornton, specialising in not-for-profit charities and community organisations.

Crucial to the success of this Project is the probity and integrity of the fund-raising and the quality and timeliness of the delivery of the completed Project. It is proposed to put into place all necessary accounting systems, probity checks and audit processes to ensure the correct expenditure and controls regarding the donated funds and ensure their full accountability.

Australians at Pozieres, as a Registered Charity can receive corporate and individual donations and is in the process of obtaining Deductable Gift Recipient status (DGR) with the ATO with respect individual donations.

THE FRENCH INVOLVEMENT

We are fortunate to have as a Director of the Company Mr John McColl, a French-born Australian who has extensive connections within the French political scene, with the bureaucracy and with French businesses both in Australia and France.

John has regular telephone link-ups with the Pozières Mayor and other French ministries and is a vital link between the English-speaking and the French-speaking communities.

John has also long experience and connections with the French educational Department and was the founder of the French School in Maroubra.

Involvement with the French will include:

At the local level with the Pozières Mayor, Monsieur Bernard Delattre.

- With Paris and Amiens based education authorities
- With the French architects and project managers
- With the French bank and the dispersal of funds during construction
- With the Australian Ambassador Mr Stephen Brady
- With the French Ambassador in Canberra and the French Consul General in Sydney
- With French companies operating in Australia
- With Australian companies operating in France
- To provide translation and interpretative services
- To provide the official “go-to” point for French aspects of the Project in Australia

John McColl, as a senior and highly respected member of the Sydney French community, had the chance to speak privately with the French President, François Hollande, while here for the G20 Conference in November. The President stated that he knew of the Pozières Australia School Project and had been briefed on its development.

At a recent meeting between Serge Barcellini, the Chief of Staff of the French Minister of Veterans Affairs (Senaieur Jean-Marc Todeschini) with Bernard Delatte, he confirmed to Bernard that the School project was “*the best project from Australia for the Centenary of World War I*”. It was Serge Barcellini who briefed President Hollande.

The following is a translation from the Office of the French President, François Hollande, to the Mayor of Pozières dated 20 April 2015.

"Monsieur le Maire,

The President of the Republique has read with attention the letter that you have sent him.

Monsieur Francois Hollande has given me the task to sincerely thank you for your support for which he was very touched and constitutes for him a precious encouragement.

He wanted to assure you of the great interest given to the project of construction on your municipality of a French Australian School in homage to Australian soldiers fallen during the Battle of Pozières in the Summer of 1916.

In this respect, I have made sure to transmit your correspondence to Mr Laurent Fabius, Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Development, asking him to examine attentively your project and to keep you informed of any action which will be given to it.

Please accept, Monsieur le Maire, the assurance of my distinguished consideration.

*Isabelle SIMA
Chef de Cabinet du Président de la République"*

THE OPENING BY THE GOVERNOR OF NEW SOUTH WALES

The Pozières French-Australian School Project was officially launched by His Excellency General The Honourable David Hurley AC DSC, Governor of New South Wales on Thursday 28th May 2015 at St Clair High School in south-western Sydney.

The launch was attended by members of the Board, including Mr Will Davies, Mr John MacColl and Mr James Mitchell, Mr Eric Soulier, representative of the French Ambassador, Mr Eric Berti, the French Consul-General in Sydney, General Gordon Maitland AO, OBE RFD ED, Air Vice-Marshal Bob Treloar AO, Mr David Gray, Chairman Legacy Australia, Mr Chris Masters PhD (Hon), Mr Tony Fryer, President of St Mary's RSL, Mr Jean-Baptiste Milcamps, GM of Alliance Francaise Sydney and the Principal Mr Chris Presland and the Deputy Principal, Ms Sally Smithard.

The Governor spoke of the importance of the School Project as a “living memorial” and one uniquely honouring the Australian dead from the battle. He then officially launched the project.

Acknowledgement to country was performed by student Charlotte Kop who recognised the traditional owners of this land, the Dharug people. She paid her respect to elders past, present and future, stating they hold the memories and traditions of their people. After the speech by the French Consul-General Mr Eric Berti, the children from the French School, Lycée Condorcet sang the *Marseillaise*. Mr Guy Walton sang a specially written song, the *Fields of Pozières* and this was followed by the Australian National Anthem sung in aboriginal and English by student Jack Williams.



Mr James Mitchell, Mr Will Davies, His Excellency the Governor, Mr John MacColl

LETTERS OF SUPPORT

Letters of support have been received from the following:

- **His Excellency the Governor General the Honourable Sir Peter Cosgrove AK MC**
“Sir Peter has asked me to convey....his best wishes for the success of the Project. He hopes to support your efforts in other material ways.”
- **Hon. Julie Bishop MP
Minister of Foreign Affairs**
“I wish you every success for the initiative which will create a powerful legacy of the shared sacrifice of Australian and French soldiers in World War 1”
- **Hon. John W. Howard OM AC**
“Your proposal to rebuild the school is a wonderful and imaginative idea. It will provide a focus for commemorative activities. It will enhance understanding between two nations. I commend you on your efforts.”

- **Dr Brendan Nelson**
Director, Australian War Memorial
“I am very pleased to support the work ... [and] congratulate you on an excellent initiative and applaud the work you have done to get this vision into a reality and bring the project to fruition.”

- **Eric Berti - The French Consul-General in Sydney**
“You have the full support of the Consulate-General for France for this valuable project... and at your disposal to undertake with you... the raising of funds for the construction of this school house.”

THE WEBSITE AND COMMUNICATIONS

It is proposed to complete a Project website and have this operational by the end of July 2016. www.pozieres.org.au

Provision will be made to add up-dates and progress reports, associated links and blogs and show photographs of the site and the construction process.

Individuals interested in assisting the Project should contact Will Davies on will@pozieres.org.au or via the mobile number listed below.

WEBSITE

www.pozieres.org.au

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