

**NOTIFICATION OF A FROMELLES DOCUMENTARY FOR BRITISH AND AUSTRALIAN TELEVISION WAS RECEIVED ON 14 OCTOBER 2009 FROM HIGHGATE STUDIOS. PROMOTED AS AN AWARD WINNING INDEPENDENT TELEVISION COMPANY IN LONDON, ENGLAND, DARLOW SMITHSON PRODUCTIONS ASKED WHETHER FROMELLES DISCUSSION GROUP WAS IN TOUCH WITH RELATIVES THAT MIGHT BE INTERVIEWED FOR THE OFFICIAL DOCUMENTARY, TO SUPPLEMENT THOSE OBTAINED FROM THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT AND THE JOINT CASUALTY AND COMPASSIONATE CENTRE IN THE UNITED KINGDOM. SELECTED BY THE COMMONWEALTH WAR GRAVES COMMISSION TO PRODUCE A FILM TO CHRONICLE THE RECOVERY PROJECT AT FROMELLES, DARLOW SMITHSON PRODUCTIONS WAS PROVIDED BACKGROUND ON THE GROUP AND REASSURED THAT WE HAVE ROUTINELY DIRECTED RELATIVES OF THE MISSING TO THE ADF WEBSITE FOR REGISTRATION.**

**NACRESSA SWAN, DARLOW SMITHSON PRODUCTIONS, HIGHGATE STUDIOS, LONDON:**

**Dear Nacressa,**

**Thank you for notifying us that Darlow Smithson Productions have been selected by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission to make a documentary about the Fromelles project, although I am not certain what we can do to assist considering the history of the CWGC with respect to the investigations and the continuing polarization of opinion on the subject. That said, I have consulted affiliates and had a look at your website as well as the body of work Darlow Smithson Productions has to its credit and am willing to offer our support to the venture mentioned in your Email of 14 October 2009. Presumably any film produced by your company will show impartiality and balance and provide a factual record of the initial geophysical survey and dig, using original pictures and interviews with relatives to support the commemoration of the soldiers next year.**

Darlow Smithson Productions though must be aware of international criticism in relation to the forensic and archaeological examination of the mass grave and the processes involved, problems associated with the lifting of skeletal remains and the views of Fromelles Discussion Group which began operating on the internet at the beginning of 2008 to encourage the British and Australian governments to recover, identify and individually memorialize the Great War soldiers whose story is being told. Needless to say it is the view of this group that the Rudd Labor Government in particular had an opportunity to undertake a truly historic programme of recovery at Fromelles, but lacked the vision to do so because tragically, the Commonwealth has been more intent on minimising costs and adhering to outmoded, antiquated agreements that preclude repatriation and aggregation, than honouring the dead.

Consequently our group would be grateful if Darlow Smithson Productions would canvass some of the issues raised by Fromelles Discussion Group and other social commentators during the feature-length documentary being prepared. For example issues like the selective release and distribution of news during the excavation, the

failure of the Commonwealth Government to broadly consult with the Australian community in relation to Fromelles, the politicization of the Australian Fromelles Project Group and the hurried construction of the new Fromelles (Pheasant Wood) Military Cemetery.

In reading your Email from Highgate Studios I note Fromelles Discussion Group has not actually been asked for comment or to specifically contribute to the proposed film. Therefore in offering to help I would be grateful if Darlow Smithson Productions would place the limited dig in context when analyzing the events that have unfolded. That is, one which properly explains and accounts for the controversy surrounding the project since inception. Especially so now battlefield tour companies like Mat McLachlan are warning people wanting to attend the reburial service at Fromelles in 2010, that *"Recent reports from the UK have raised the possibility that attendance numbers at the Fromelles dedication service may be restricted."* Typically the authorities will even stage-manage this part of the proceedings and possibly deny some relatives the right to attend.

In conclusion I would also like to request further background to the film being produced. Fromelles Discussion Group would like to learn when the tender for the official documentary on Fromelles was advertised by the CWGC, on what date the contract was awarded and which satellite nations have actually contributed to financing it. Since the CWGC is no longer funded to search for the missing, affiliates are a little surprised to learn that Darlow Smithson Productions has been awarded such a contract, particularly when an Australian World War II and Korean War veteran, Dr Alan Young, has produced several DVD's relating to this era including 'Forging the ANZAC Tradition: The Untold Story' and 'Fromelles', which is the first in a series about this historical period—all in a private capacity without cost to the corporate entity which has hired you.

**Regardless should you wish to waiver the Copyright Statement to your Email of the 14th instant, I would be happy to post the material containing an active LINK on our website to promote what you are doing, together with my reply for members of the public to consider. Please let me reassure you also that this group has routinely referred relatives of the missing from this assault, whether or not they are believed to be buried at Pheasant Wood and promulgated in the list of First AIF soldiers released by the then Minister for Defence Science and Personnel, the Hon. Warren Snowdon MP on 2 April 2009, to the ADF website for registration. Finally we note there are even reports circulating that this function of the ADF website will shortly close which makes one again wonder just how serious the authorities are about identifying these already neglected First World War soldiers.**

**Best wishes and kindest regards,  
Grant Triffett, Convenor/Administrator, Fromelles Discussion Group**

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