

MIA recovery unit established by Army

THE DATE IN THIS COMMUNICATION TO THE HON DAVID JOHNSON, MINISTER FOR DEFENCE, IS MISLEADING. ON THE 1ST DECEMBER 2014 A BRIEF EMAIL WAS FORWARDED TO UNRECOVERED WAR CASUALTIES—ARMY IN RELATION TO THE PERMANENCY OF THE RECOVERY GROUP. THE UWC-A OPERATES OUT OF THE OFFICE OF THE CHIEF OF ARMY. A COOPER, INVESTIGATIONS CASE MANAGER—EUROPE, UNRECOVERED WAR CASUALTIES-ARMY, DEPARTMENT OF DEFENCE SENT A FEW WORDS ELECTRONICALLY IN REPLY. THEREUPON AN EMAIL WAS SENT BACK REQUESTING FURTHER DETAIL, VIZ. BACKGROUND INFORMATION ON THE ROLE, STRUCTURE AND LEGISLATIVE OBLIGATIONS OF THE GROUP. THERE HAD BEEN PERSISTENT RUMOURS ABOUT THE RETRIEVAL PROCESS, WHICH WERE PART OF THE FROMELLES PROJECT AND OUTLINED IN THE LETTER TO DAVID JOHNSTON ATTACHED BELOW. COOPER REPLIED AGAIN QUICKLY SUGGESTING THE RUMOURS WERE INCORRECT. THIS INFORMATION WAS CONVEYED TO US IN THE UNCLASSIFIED LETTER OF 5TH DECEMBER 2014.

From: Grant Triffett <grantriffett@bigpond.com>
Subject: **Fromelles Project**
Date: 7 December 2014 9:53:23 AM

Senator the Hon David Johnston, Minister for Defence, Senator for Western Australia, Ground Floor, 183 Great Eastern Highway, Belmont. WA 6984. **EMAIL:** senator.johnston@aph.gov.a...

Dear Senator Johnston,

On the 5th December 2014 I contacted the Investigations Case Manager—Europe, Unrecovered War Casualties - Army, to obtain further detail about the role, structure, staffing and legislative obligations of Army - UWC. As you probably know the establishment of a permanent accounting body was a key feature of our campaign in relation to Fromelles.

During this process I also raised the possibility that the joint Australian and British Fromelles project team might have recovered a number of First World War diggers from other Western Front cemeteries in close proximity to the mass burial site at Pheasant Wood in northern France where 250 Australian and British soldiers have been identified using the latest scientific methods and extensive historical research. That is, bodies extraneous to those buried in the pits near the village of Fromelles which were supposed to be subject of excavation, recovery and reinterment with full military honours.

In the communication to the Investigations Case Manager—Europe I said:

"Rumours have persisted for some time that during the process of retrieving bodies of missing soldiers from the mass grave outside Fromelles, the extraction team disinterred a number of cadavers from other WWI cemeteries within the region— something which was practically outside the purview of the original project."

Furthermore I added:

"Not that I am criticising the identification of any First Australian Imperial Force soldier that needs to be properly honoured, but it would be curious should this have occurred when Commonwealth authorities had rejected the notion of investigating the 400 K.I.A. and D.O.W. interred at VC Corner Cemetery which have no headstones. A cemetery located in the middle of the old no-man's-land between the Australian and German trenches of 19 July 1916."

As Minister for Defence would you please clarify this situation. I believe at one stage the names of several cemeteries were bandied about.

Regards Grant Triffett, Convenor/Administrator, Fromelles Discussion Group

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