



**Dr Brendan Nelson**  
Director

1 September 2015  
ENQU10006-042316

Mr John Denman  
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31 Griffell Way  
DUNCRAIG WA 6023

Dear Mr Denman

Thank you for your letter dated 18 August 2015 regarding my speech on the 70th anniversary of the end of the Second World War in the Pacific, in which you raised the absence of a specific reference to the 2/2nd Commando Squadron.

During the Second World War the 2/2nd Independent Company (later the 2/2nd Commando Squadron) indeed established a reputation second to no other unit in the Australian army. The company's guerrilla war on Timor in 1942 has been widely – and rightly – praised, while the squadron's operations in New Guinea in 1943 and New Britain in 1945 were conducted with similar skill and bravery.

The year 1942 was one of the defining moments in our history. Never before or since has Australia – our land, our people, and our beliefs – experienced such a direct threat. From the shock of the fall of Singapore in February through to the bravery of HMAS *Yarra's* gallant final actions in the Java Sea in March, and the courage and endurance of Australian soldiers at Kokoda, Milne Bay, and El Alamién, 1942 was a year of victory and defeat. Throughout it all, however, the 2/2nd Independent Company's campaign on Timor was a year-long highlight for the Allied war effort.

Given the scale, diversity and complexity of Australia's experiences during the conflict it was not possible to mention all aspects of Australia's war in my address on VP Day. This in no way diminishes either the service or sacrifice of the 2/2nd Independent Company's efforts on Timor and the crucial assistance offered by the Timorese people.

The Memorial has for many years been committed to collecting and promoting the story of the 2/2nd Independent Company on Timor. In addition to books and articles, a large amount of archival material relating to the campaign (including official records, private records, and oral history interviews) is in the Memorial's Research Centre; there are also entries on the Memorial's website dedicated to Timor. Our permanent Second World War Galleries include an exhibit where the wireless set "Winnie the war winner" features prominently. The story of "Winnie" also appeared in Nola Anderson's *Australian War Memorial: treasures from a century of collecting* (2012). Similarly, role of the 2/2nd Independent Company will also be covered in a new book currently being written by Memorial Senior Historian Dr Karl James. This book, *Double diamonds: Australian commandos*

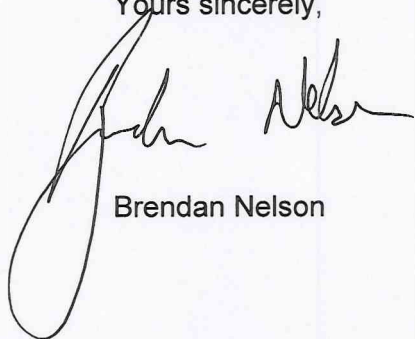
*Here is their spirit, in the heart of the land they loved; and here we guard the record which they themselves made.* C.E.W. Bean

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*in the Pacific, 1941–45*, due for release in 2016, is an illustrated history of independent companies and commando squadrons.

Thank you for writing to me.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Brendan Nelson'. The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large loop at the end of the first name.

Brendan Nelson