The Manager
ClubGRANTS

16 May 2016

Kokoda … the spirit lives
(a feature documentary project seeking ClubGRANTS funding)

As Gallipoli symbolises the Anzac spirit, so Kokoda is its World War Two equivalent. Next year will mark the 75th anniversary of Australia’s darkest hours when Australian Diggers were fighting for their lives and our liberty along the infamous Kokoda Track.

Their achievements were derided at the time and for 50 years they were largely ignored. Now the Kokoda Diggers are all in their 90s and they are fading.

We cannot let their stories fade with them. We must ensure they are honoured and that their sacrifices are understood and appreciated by those of us who enjoy the freedom they bequeathed us.

Indeed, theirs is a truly remarkable story. In 1942 a rampant Japanese Army swarmed over the Pacific and landed in New Guinea, then Australian territory. They were at our doorstep and the only troops standing between them and our mainland were a group of young, poorly-trained, under-equipped Militia units, who had never fired a shot in anger.

These young Diggers held on against odds of five or six to one just long enough for our seasoned AIF Diggers to be rushed back from the Middle East and to eventually turn back and defeat the Japanese.

The spirit exhibited by the Diggers and their PNG comrades (the beloved Fuzzy Wuzzy Angels) has since inspired generations of Australians and transformed walking the Kokoda Track into a rite of passage.

As part of next year’s 75th anniversary commemorations, we are producing a feature documentary, Kokoda … the spirit lives, a modern telling of the story and an examination of the spirit that sustained the Diggers and still inspires so many today.

Once the documentary is completed, we will partner with the RSL & Services Clubs Association to conduct a national outreach program.

The program will centre on an extensive series of special screenings in RSL clubs, bringing together local communities with surviving veterans and their descendants to keep the story alive and to hand it on to future generations. The program will also aim to raise funds for the Kokoda Track Foundation’s PNG programs to improve the lives of the descendants of the Fuzzy Wuzzy Angels.

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The outreach program will honour surviving Kokoda veterans, commemorate their comrades who did not return and create and build a growing awareness of their remarkable achievements in securing our liberty.

It will also aim to promote awareness of the Kokoda App, which we created in 2013, in partnership with the RSL & Services Clubs Association and a number of RSL clubs and sub-branches.

(The Kokoda App is available free on Apple and Android and aims to bring the Kokoda story to the digital generation.)

We are crowdfunding the production costs of the documentary through the Federal government agency, Creative Partnerships Australia, which provides tax deductibility through its online platform.

We are seeking funding support for the project from RSL clubs and sub-branches because we know they are the repository of the Diggers’ legacy and that they represent the heartland of our communities.

Please rest assured that any funding support you can provide will be used to develop the best possible documentary to keep the story of Kokoda alive and to give long-overdue recognition to the Diggers (just as I have done in previous documentaries, Kokoda ... the Bloody Track (1992) and Kokoda ... the Last Parade (1998) and the Kokoda App (2013)).

Should you need further information, please check out www.kokodathespiritlives.com or contact me at patrick@patricklindsay.com.au or on 0407 099 967.

Yours sincerely

Patrick Lindsay AM
Author and Broadcaster
Patrick Lindsay and Papua New Guinea

Lindsay spent more than 25 years in network TV as a reporter, producer, writer and presenter, on the Nine and Seven networks and Sky News. Since 2002 he has been one of Australia’s leading non-fiction authors, having written 20 best-selling books.

Lindsay first visited PNG in 1983 to shoot a series of reports for Nine’s Today program. He briefly visited Kokoda and heard, for the first time in detail, of the remarkable story of the battle that saved Australia. He was captivated by the story and the country.

He returned to PNG in 1985 and 1987, shooting many stories for Nine’s Wide World of Sports. In 1990 and 1991 he was there again to shoot the acclaimed documentary, Kokoda ... The Bloody Track, for the Australian Army. In 1992 he walked the Track for the first time. In 1998 he returned to shoot his second doco, Kokoda ... The Last Parade, the story of the Diggers’ return to the battlefields to say their final farewell to the mates they left behind.

In 2001, Lindsay wrote The Spirit of Kokoda, published in 2002. In 2003 he wrote The Spirit of The Digger and The Essence of Kokoda and that year he became one of the founding directors of the Kokoda Track Foundation, an Australian aid organization which aims to help to improve the lives of the people of PNG. He has been KTF’s chairman since 2006.

In 2009 Lindsay wrote Kokoda Spirit, a richly illustrated telling of the Kokoda story, then and now. In 2011 he created the format for the acclaimed TV series In Their Footsteps (which featured an episode on Kokoda) and which was broadcast by the Nine Network. In 2013, in partnership with the RSL & Services Clubs Association, he wrote and created the Kokoda App, for Apple and Android, to bring the story to the digital generation.

In June 2015, Lindsay was named a Member of the Order of Australia for ‘significant service to the media as a television presenter and journalist, to international relations, and to literature as an author’.