

**23 April 2021**

## **Virtual memorial honours Stanthorpe First World War Kyoomba Sanatorium**

As the Southern Downs prepares for the return of traditional Anzac Day services, an exciting digital preservation project is underway to honour an important piece of the region's wartime history.

Little was known about the Kyoomba Sanatorium when local historian and author Deb Wheeler began her research journey into the World War 1 military hospital, however her determination and commitment resulted in two books, and now the history of this respected medical institute will be available online with free access.

Funded through the Commonwealth Government's Saluting Their Service Commemorative Grants Program, Deb received \$10,000 from the Southern Downs Regional Council to build a virtual memorial website to honour the facility which treated returned soldiers recovering from tuberculosis and other lung diseases between 1916 and 1935.

Southern Downs Mayor Vic Pennisi said projects such as these were integral to preserving the local wartime history now and for future generations.

"Southern Downs has a rich military history and Council has supported numerous projects over the years which honour and preserve the legacy of the Australian service personnel who selflessly served our country and fought for our freedom," Mayor Pennisi said.

"Deb's tireless research and desire to uncover untold stories identified 550 soldiers, doctors, nurses and others connected with the Kyoomba Sanatorium. Had it not been for her determination and commitment, this information may have been lost forever."

The Kyoomba Sanatorium digital project is designed to preserve the history of the region's involvement during and after War World 1 and to capture the records of returned soldiers and service personnel such as nurses, doctors and general workers who were associated with the facility.

Deb said that developing a digital memorial for local World War 1 veterans had been a dream of hers from the outset of her research and she was both thrilled and humbled to see it come to fruition.

"Since the start, I wanted to capture as much history about this mostly forgotten facility, and this project is not only important to our own region, but also has significant military and medical implications Australia-wide," she said.

"Once I started to pull the threads together and got more deeply involved, I realised just how important it was to uncover the stories and honour the people who enlisted and did so much for our country in order for me to live the life I enjoy today."

"Local families will soon have an online portal to learn more about the stories of their loved ones who served in World War 1 and were treated at the Kyoomba Sanatorium."

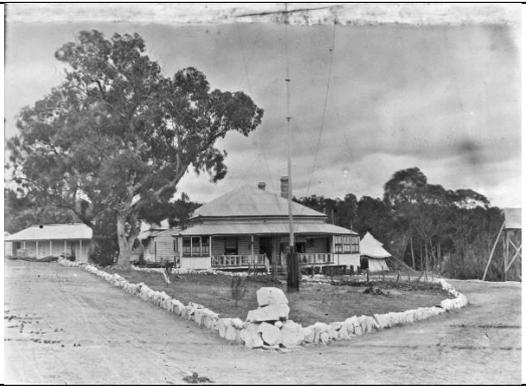
Benefits of the project will not only reach the Southern Downs community but also state and national associations such as the Australian War Memorial, Genealogy Societies, libraries as well as military and history researches from around the world.

The virtual project is well underway and is expected to be finalised by early December 2021.

*The activity was funded under the Commonwealth Government's Saluting Their Service Commemorative Grants Program.*

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	<p>Returned soldiers and service personnel, nurses, doctors and workers who were associated with Kyoomba Sanatorium.</p>
	<p>Kyoomba Sanatorium, 1916 and 1935.</p>

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