



Rugby league shows its support for peacekeepers memorial

By Ross Peake

The proposal to build a peacekeepers memorial in Canberra will be given a boost at tomorrow's NRL round.

The backers of the project are also hoping next month's 65th anniversary of sending Australians overseas as peacekeepers will loosen corporate and government purse strings.

The federal government gave an initial \$200,000 towards designing the memorial, which has space allocated on Anzac Parade near the Australian War Memorial.

However, no funding to construct the memorial was included in the Anzac Centenary program this year.

As well, the project has lost the Designated Gift Recipient status that makes donations above \$2 tax deductible.

More than 65,000 Australians have served on peacekeeping duties since the first missions by civilians and military observers to Indonesia in 1947.

Memorial committee chairman retired Major-General Tim Ford said the 65th anniversary of that first mission would be remembered on September 14 at the memorial's proposed site on Anzac Parade.

As well, tomorrow's match in Sydney between the South Sydney Rabbitohs and the Parramatta Eels will be dedicated to personnel of the Australian Defence Force who are serving in Australia and on operations and peacekeeping missions.

A fund-raising dinner for the memorial was held in Sydney last night where NSW Governor Marie Bashir was guest of honour. Mr Ford said most of the initial \$800,000 raised had been used for the design of the memorial and building a prototype.

"We need \$2.9 million to be able to build this memorial," he said.

"We were hoping the Anzac Centenary

program would pick this up because we believe these peacekeepers are our young Anzacs of today.

"We are hoping eventually . . . they will fund this memorial.

"We could build it in six months from the moment we get assured money."

Corporate Australia, including defence companies that make billions from military projects, has mostly snubbed the proposal since its inception in 2004.

Former foreign minister Kevin Rudd told the dinner the international community should pay close attention to the situation in Sinai.

"One theatre which Australia should particularly focus on today is the Sinai where Australia since March 1982 for four years and a subsequent presence since 1992, has contributed troops to the Multinational Force and Observers which underpins a large part of a peace treaty between Egypt and Israel and the security of the immediate border regions," he said.

"As someone who has followed these events closely over a long period of time I am deeply concerned about the security and stability of this area, including security of the MFO deployment."



BACKING REQUIRED: An artist's impression of the proposed peacekeepers memorial