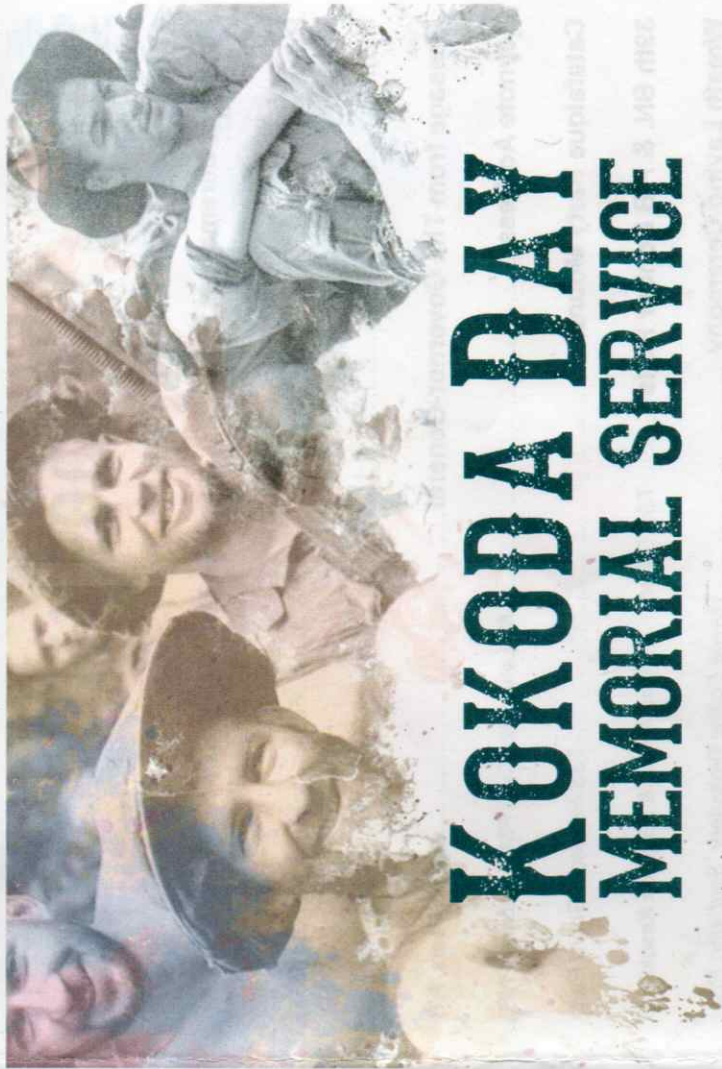


**THE 39th AUSTRALIAN INFANTRY BATTALION**, mainly composed of 18 to 19 year old Citizen Force soldiers, was based initially in Port Moresby on echelon tasks. In June 1942 the 39th was ordered north to secure Kokoda against a Japanese attack on Port Moresby across the "impassable" Owen Stanley Range. The Capture of Port Moresby would have given the Japanese a base for the invasion of Australia. On 21st July the Japanese landed near Gona and advanced inland. The 39th fought delaying actions near Gorari and later, reinforced by PIB elements, at Oivi before being overwhelmed at Kokoda. Kokoda was again lost. On 8th August, a three company attack enabled A Coy to re-take Kokoda. This Company resisted constant fierce onslaughts until nightfall of 10th August when, greatly outnumbered and food and ammunition exhausted, they withdrew with their wounded. The 39th then fought pitched battles at Deniki and Isurava. At Isurava they held the Japanese until 26th August when the 2/14 Bn arrived to save them from annihilation. The 39th, depleted and exhausted, stayed to support the 2/14. The 39th fought its last Kokoda Track action at Eora Creek and when finally relieved at Kagi on 5th September, it had marched and fought continuously for 6 weeks. By the time they were withdrawn for return to Australia they could only muster 32 men remaining from the original force. They suffered casualties of 118 KIA, 266 WIA and untold sickness.

**THE 2/14th BN** on 13th August 42, the 21st Brigade incl 2/14th Inf Bn disembarked in Port Moresby without urgent supplies and artillery held up on the wharves in Australia. Three days later they marched to Uberi reaching Myola 21 Aug. On 25th August the battalion received orders to relieve the severely depleted 39th Bn which was holding the Japanese at Isurava. On 27 Aug the Japanese offensive began in earnest putting Isurava at threat. The 2/14th Bn consolidated on 28th August around Isurava facing some 6 enemy battalions. Fierce fighting continued to Ioribaiwa and Imita ridge. In these ongoing battles to the 30th August the 2/14 was severely damaged. The 2/14 was temporarily withdrawn from the line on 16th Sep. The battalion had commenced the Kokoda campaign with 546 men. Upon arrival at reserve in Uberi they had only 88 men available for operations. The consolidated 39th - 2/14th campaign is considered one of the finest examples of battle endurance fought in the Pacific.

**THE PIB AND ANCILLARY TROOPS** at Kokoda. The first mainline military attack on the Japanese Army was an ambush conducted by the PIB on 23rd July near Awala. Later they joined the 39th Bn for operations against the Japanese. Maroubra Force was born. Together, the 39th Bn with the PIB in support, fought the first historic Kokoda battle which brought glory to them and the Allies. They held back the Japanese until the arrival of the 2/14th reinforcements. Throughout the campaigns to follow the PIB and NGIB troops supported by ANGAU, the Coast Watchers and M Special, NGVR and ancillary government administration, fought with the Australian forces in all the PNG campaigns throughout Papua New Guinea and the Islands. In 1944 the PIB was combined with the NGIB Battalions to form the Pacific Islands Regiment which today carries their Battle Honours on its colours. Their war time decorations included 1 DSO, 6 MC, 4 DCM, 2 GM, 20MM and 10 MID. More than 3,500 Papuans and New Guineans served during the course of the war. They imposed some 2,600 casualties on the enemy suffering 230 killed, missing and wounded.



# KOKODA DAY MEMORIAL SERVICE

Rotary Kokoda Memorial Wall  
Cascade Gardens, Broadbeach

Wednesday 8th August 2018

On the occasion of the 76th Anniversary of the  
Defence of Kokoda 8th to 10th August 1942 by  
the 39th Australian Infantry Battalion  
& Papuan Infantry Battalion

*"The price of liberty is eternal vigilance"*

*Refreshments to follow at RSL Club Southport*



Rotary  
Club of Broadbeach Southport

PIB



SOUTHPORT CLUB BRANCH