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**FAMILIES AND FRIENDS OF THE FIRST AIF
Inc**

p.a. Senior Member Mme Anny De Decker

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15 sept. 2017

Commemoration of the Centenary of the Third Battle of Ypres ANZAC Memorial, Sydney, 26 September 2017

Dear President Jim Munro,

Honourable Ladies and Gentlemen,

We, the City of Ypres, City of Peace, in Flanders, Belgium acknowledge the efforts and the dedication of your organisation towards the commemoration of the service, sacrifice, courage and suffering of the First Australian Imperial Force in the Great War 1914-18 and of their families and friends.

Your organisation of a Commemoration of the Centenary of the Third Battle of Ypres at the ANZAC memorial in Sydney on Tuesday September 26 is an extremely great honour to us.

Therefore we are proud to send you this message from the City of Ypres, City of Peace in Flanders Fields in Belgium:

At the In Flanders Fields Museum in the Cloth Hall in Ypres, every day, and on the day exactly one hundred years after their death, the casualties of the First World War in Belgium are commemorated. Today, 26 September 2017, 4,972 names will be projected on the museum walls. Of those 677 names are Australian, belonging to men who were killed in the Battle of Polygon Wood, as part of the 1917 Third Battle of Ypres. In relative terms it was the most successful action by the ANZAC Corps in Belgium. During the First World War 14,271 Australians were killed or mortally wounded in Belgium, more than 90% of whom died during the summer and autumn of 1917, when the Australian Imperial Force helped to support the British offensive towards Passchendaele..

This loss for Australia in the Great European War has forged a lasting link between Belgium and Australia, which is daily commemorated with a Last Post ceremony at the Menin Gate Memorial to the Missing in Ypres. On the walls of the gate 6,179 Australian missing are commemorated. The other 8,000 Australian dead in Belgium are buried and honoured in war graves cemeteries across the former front zone. That immense presence and absence of Australian lives is not forgotten.

The Menin Gate lions at the entrance of the war memorial in Canberra are daily reminders of our bond in time. Annually Australians visit Belgium and Ypres, and also Belgians come to visit Australia. The city of Ypres itself that was completely destroyed and reconstructed, and that receives now annually hundreds of thousands of pilgrims and visitors from across the world, has taken on a new identity. Ypres is a City of Peace now, and wants to remind us the ties that bind us with Australia and many other nations, should be our advocates for lasting peace in the world.

We wish you a good receipt of this letter and our "Message from Ypres, Belgium". We can assure you that our thoughts will be with you on September 26th.

Yours sincerely



Ir. Jef Verschoore

President of the In Flanders Fields Museum, Ypres

First Deputy Mayor City of Ypres, deputy for the Remembrance 14-18

Provincial councillor.