



Media Statement

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Bridgetown student blazing a trail to the Western Front

Bridgetown school student Ilka Mitchell took another step closer towards the First World War's historic Western Front recently, when she received her official ANZAC Student Tour blazer from Premier Alan Carpenter.

Ilka, a Year 12 student at Manjimup Senior High School, is one of 12 students selected to travel with Mr Carpenter to France and Belgium this month as part of the Premier's ANZAC Student Tour 2008.

Mr Carpenter said the students will be walking in the footsteps of the ANZACs paying tribute to those who served or were killed or injured on the battlefields of the Western Front.

"More than 48,000 young Australians, not much older than the students selected for this tour, lost their lives on the battlefields of France and Belgium," Mr Carpenter said.

"The students chosen to take part in the tour have demonstrated an interest in Australia's role at the Western Front and are all outstanding representatives of young Western Australia.

"Ilka is a talented student who has received awards in English and Society and Environment, and has represented her school in hockey and netball," he said.

Ilka, whose grandfather served in Korea with the British Royal Signallers and uncle was in the SAS, said she expects the tour to be one highlight after another.

"Going overseas to see where Australians fought and forged our national identity will be an experience," she said.

"My dad's always had an interest in war so it is something I became interested in and I decided to learn about the politics and what started the war."

Mr Carpenter said the tour has special significance in 2008 as the students will join him at the Dawn Service on April 25 at the French village of Villiers-Bretonneux to mark the 90th anniversary of the town's liberation from German occupation.

"This tour is part of the State Government's commitment to raising the profile of ANZAC Day in the lives of all Western Australians, remembering the sacrifices of our forebears.

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Photo attached. Ilka is available for interviews.