

On behalf of the

MHSG an GMRG



Dear Sir / Madam,

This submission is submitted on behalf of the Military Historical Society Geelong (MHSG) and the Geelong Military Re-Enactment group (GMRG) and identifies four separate concerns of the members of these organisations.

Introduction.

The GMRG and MHSG are long-standing voluntary organizations which have contributed over many years to supporting local community organizations in a variety of ways.

Living history is a growing worldwide phenomenon with substantial growth in Australia over the last 30 years. The reality is, it will grow much more in the years to come and it is important that both State and Federal governments continue to work with organizations such as ours to meet the needs of both our members and their constituents.

The GMRG and the MHSG are the largest independent Living History group in Australia. We have been funded for activities by both the Federal and State governments.

The Geelong Military Re-enactment Group was formed as part of the Military Historical Society Geelong in 1994. At the time, members decided that they needed an added dimension to the collecting and study of military history. It was then decided to form a group representing the famous 2/14 Battalion of WW2. This battalion had fought in both the Middle East and on the Kokoda track. Our group has grown from there. As the demand for the GMRG to participate in a variety of events such as Air shows Downunder there was a need to represent the enemy that opposed the Australian forces in WW2. As a result we have a number of members who represent the armed forces of Germany in WW2 consequently their portrayal and equipment have Nazi symbols on them. While our organizations have no association with any groups both left or right, or their ideology, objectives or intentions, we do represent historians, modellers, collectors and Re-Enactors.

The GMRG's members range in age from sixteen to eighty years, with occupations including students, police officers, doctors, lawyers, nurses, teachers, engineers and trades people. Our young members are mentored and taught about firearms safety, military history and good and responsible citizenship.

The living history group (GMRG) has provided ceremonial parties for ANZAC Day parades, Remembrance Day and special occasions commemorating actions involving the Australians, and its enemies, in all wars.

We have performed publicly at the Australian War Memorial, RSL events, Airshows Down Under, Australian Federation Tattoo and many community events.

In the past ten years we have donated over \$20,000 to the National Trust and over \$5,000 to community organizations (raised from our military Living History events) as well as supporting community activities for Australia Day, Anzac Day Remembrance Day and general military commemorations. GMRG's performances regularly attract hundreds if not thousands of spectators.

Our members use equipment, uniforms and transport to provide to the public a faithful and accurate representation of the armies involved the traumatic events of the 20th century.

A short list of the major public events GMRG has either organized or participated in since it was established in 1994 is:

- The Geelong Vintage Rally 1994. We organized and performed a night time military Tattoo as well as daytime participation.
- Anzac Day 1994 until present (ongoing events) with both firing of artillery at the RSL Johnson Park service and in front of over 6000 people at the annual service at Pt Danger Torquay.
- Airshows Down Under 1995, 1997,
- Australia Remembers 1995 Participation in a wide variety of community event with us being sponsored by the Department of Veterans Affairs.
- Lilydale Agricultural Fair 1995.
- Geelong Vintage Rally 1996, 1997 and 1998
- Lake Goldsmith Steam Rally 1995 and 1996
- Lara Heritage Festival 1998.
- Wings Wheels and Water at Pt Cook air base 1998
- Wings Wheels and Water Ballarat airfield 1999
- The Australian War memorial 1999 and 2000
- National Serviceman's reunion Port Fairy 2001
- Winchelsea Book launch WW1 soldiers 2001 Sponsored by DVA
- Winchelsea Book launch WW2 soldiers 2002 Sponsored by DVA
- Australian Federation tattoo 2002
- Tyabb air show 2003, 2004, 2014
- Military Historical Society of Australia Bi annual Conference at Bandiana army base Albury. 2004

- VJ day celebration at Ballarat Airfield 2005.
- Lara Heritage Festival 2006
- Lions Club of Geelong Annual Australia Day Children's Day 2000 to present.
- Rotary Club of Diamond Creek. Diamond Creek Town Fair 2007
- Winchelsea Festival 2007, 2009, 2011
- Mont De Lancey. Historic Homestead and Museum, Anzac to Armistice Living History event.2008.
- Midlands Military Meet and rendezvous. Campbell Town Tasmania 2009, 2012
- National Trust, Barwon Park Winchelsea 2011, 2013
- National Trust, Gallipoli centenary commemoration "Gallipoli Before and Beyond" 2015
- Airshows Down Under Gallipoli centenary commemoration 2015 and 2017 and 2019.
- Waurun Ponds community commemorative service for those who have served 2003 to present.

This list is by no means comprehensive, but cites examples of events which we have not only presented living history but have presented battlefield history which encompassed blank firing and pyrotechnics. Numerous State and Federal politicians have attended and enjoyed these activities in an official capacity and can vouch for our activities. The Hon. Sarah Henderson MP opened the Barwon Park event in 2015 on behalf of the Federal government commemorative grants project.

Our Concerns;

Number1. That such blanket statements as this do not address the nuances associated with Nazi memorabilia and education of members of the community in relation to WW2 history and the Nazi regime;

"create offences for publicly displaying prohibited Nazi or Islamic State symbols, and trading in items bearing these symbols"

Consequently, re-enactors are inadvertently caught up in this as they would purchase and display these items / symbols as part of the educational displays that the GMRG undertake. This legislation needs to be amended to meet the needs of Re-enactors.

Number 2.

That such blanket statements as this do not address the nuances associated with Nazi memorabilia and education of members of the community in relation to WW2 history and the Nazi regime;

“create offences for publicly displaying prohibited Nazi or Islamic State symbols, and trading in items bearing these symbols”

Consequently, Historians and collectors will not be able to purchase or sell such items / symbols. To be able to display, discuss and educate people, they need to be able to purchase these items / symbols. Let alone the basic right of Australian citizens to partake in a legitimate hobby of collecting militaria. This legislation needs to be amended to meet the needs of Historians and collectors.

Number 3.

That if the government were actually serious about the issues they claim are associated with hate and hate crimes, then this course of action, that they wish to undertake should also include communist symbols especially those of the Stalinist period. Historians now know that Communism has been responsible for more deaths than Nazi Germany and as a result should be identified along with Nazi symbols as of a hateful nature. We see the leaving out of the proposed legislation of such communist / Stalinist period symbols as hypocrisy and out of touch with the historical reality. One must question why this omission would take place. This legislation needs to be amended to include Soviet / Stalinist items which have the hammer and sickle on them as they are symbols of hate and millions of innocent people have died under these symbols. They are symbolic of hate to many Australians, especially those from East European nations.

Number 4.

That such blanket statements as this do not address the nuances associated with Nazi memorabilia and education of members of the community in relation to WW2 history and the Nazi regime;

“create offences for publicly displaying prohibited Nazi or Islamic State symbols, and trading in items bearing these symbols”

Consequently, Modellers and those selling models bearing a Nazi symbol will not be able to purchase or sell such models nor display them at model shows and exhibitions. Nor be able to make a period piece model of WW2 German aircraft and vehicles. Modellers need to be able to purchase these items / symbols. Let alone the basic right of Australian citizens to partake in a legitimate hobby of

collecting modelling military items. This legislation needs to be amended to meet the needs of Modellers.

On behalf of the

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Robin Mawson.

