

**A RECEPTION TO MARK THE 25<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY OF THE  
RAISING OF THE 12<sup>TH</sup>/40<sup>TH</sup> ROYAL TASMANIA REGIMENT,  
THURSDAY 13<sup>TH</sup> DECEMBER 2011**

As a result of the Government's White paper on Defence released in 1987 the 12<sup>th</sup>/40<sup>th</sup> Battalion; the Royal Tasmania Regiment became effective on this day 25 years ago. So this evening it is my pleasure to welcome you all here to Government House this evening to celebrate the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of that event; the raising of the 12<sup>th</sup>/40<sup>th</sup> RTR.

Although the unit is only 25 years old it has a proud lineage that can be traced back a lot earlier than 1987 for it all began with the raising of the Tasmanian Volunteer Rifle regiment in 1878 - 134 years ago. Twenty years later saw the first contingent of Tasmanians depart for the Boer War during which the first two Victoria Crosses to be awarded to Australian Infantrymen went to Pvte Bisdee and Lt Wylly of the 1<sup>st</sup> Tasmanian Imperial Bushman.

During WWI, the 12<sup>th</sup> and 40<sup>th</sup> Battalions were raised as part of the Australian Imperial Force and served with distinction overseas. Their sacrifice earned the two Battalions three Theatre Honours and twenty five Battle Honours.

Although those two battalions were demobilized after Remembrance Day 1918, the 2<sup>nd</sup>/12<sup>th</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup>/40<sup>th</sup> Battalions were raised at the outbreak of WWII, and, once again, were deployed for overseas service. Throughout the war, the Battalions earned two

Theatre Honours, a Campaign Honour and 13 Battle Honours. Their service included the Defence of Tobruk and Milne Bay where the first defeat on land was inflicted on the Japanese.

The direct descendant of the 12<sup>th</sup> Battalion, the 12<sup>th</sup>/50<sup>th</sup> Battalion, served in York Force and the Northern Territory and the 40<sup>th</sup> Battalion served in Darwin. On 2 May 1945, the 12<sup>th</sup>/50<sup>th</sup> Battalion was amalgamated with the 40<sup>th</sup> Battalion and became the 12<sup>th</sup>/40<sup>th</sup> Battalion. This Battalion formed the bulk of Timor Force, which accepted the surrender of the Japanese forces from the commander of the 48<sup>th</sup> Japanese Division at Koepang on 3 October 1945. It returned to Australia on 19 March 1946 and was disbanded on 29 May of that year.

On 1 July 1948 the 12<sup>th</sup>/40<sup>th</sup> Battalion was raised again as part of the Citizen Military Forces. On 30 June 1951, this Battalion was separated and became the 1st and 2nd Battalions, The Tasmania Regiment. On the 1 July 1960, The Tasmania Regiment was granted the Royal prefix and became The Royal Tasmania Regiment.

The period between 1960 and 1987 saw several reorganisations of the Royal Tasmania Regiment but on 13<sup>th</sup> December 25 years ago, 12<sup>th</sup> Independent Rifle Company and 40<sup>th</sup> Independent Rifle Company amalgamated and were joined by soldiers from disbanded units to form the 12<sup>th</sup>/40<sup>th</sup> Battalion, The Royal Tasmania Regiment.

Since the conclusion of the 1990s, the Australian Defence Force has been engaged in continuous operations, both at home and abroad. Throughout the entirety of this period, personnel from 12/40<sup>th</sup> RTR have supported each operation, whether on an individual or collective basis. In recent years, a key focus of the unit has been to provide large contributions of unit personnel to support Operation Anode in the Solomon Islands.

So there is much to celebrate. At present, the 12<sup>th</sup>/40<sup>th</sup> Royal Tasmanian Regiment currently employs 271 personnel of both full-time and part-time soldiers and has grown to be a dominant and effective force within Tasmania.

There are a number of distinguished guests here this evening who have strong connections to the 12<sup>th</sup>/40<sup>th</sup> RTR. They include the Honourable William Cox, my immediate predecessor, and Colonel D F Townsend, who was the commanding Officer back in 1987. I think I am right to add that we also have present four other previous Commanding officers, Lieutenant Colonels Zehmeister, and Riley, and more recently, Major Generals Steve Smith and Greg Melick.

Last, but certainly not least, the current Commanding Officer Lieutenant Colonel David Hughes is here and now I ask him to come up to the stage and join me as I unveil this plaque to mark the 12<sup>th</sup>/40<sup>th</sup> Royal Tasmania Regiment's 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary.