



MEDIA RELEASE

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International military historian and strategist joins RSL

The RSL Virtual War Memorial now has a specialist military history ambassador – Professor Robert O’Neill, a Rhodes scholar with personal experience of frontline active service.

Professor O’Neill has held significant positions including Director of the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS), London, 1982-87, and Chichele Professor of the History of War, All Souls College, Oxford. These roles combined with his other experience have positioned him as a much sought after advisor at national and international levels.

Professor O’Neill served in the Australian Army from 1955 to 1968, graduating from RMC Duntroon in 1958. After the award of a PhD in modern history at Oxford following his Rhodes scholarship, he was mentioned in despatches on deployment with the 5th Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment in Vietnam (1966-67). Among subsequent appointments, he was chairman of trustees at the Imperial War Museum for four years and served on the Commonwealth War Graves Commission for 11 years.

Professor O’Neill has written a two-volume history of Australia’s role in the Korean War, and was awarded an honorary Doctor of Letters degree by the Australian National University in 2001.

The Virtual War Memorial (VWM) is the major Centenary of ANZAC initiative undertaken by RSL SA. Launched in 2014, its ever-growing collection is enshrining military records and biographies within a perpetual online archive.

Welcoming his ambassadorial role, Professor O’Neill says: “My responsibilities will extend to raising general awareness of the Virtual War Memorial as a national resource, both among professional experts and among the public at large, particularly the families of veterans.”

Professor O’Neill will be in Adelaide to mentor and guide the VWM Team in the preparation of its strategic plan for the next major development phase. Whilst here will also deliver a speech “*Defending Australia in the 21st Century*” to a select group representing, government, business and industry.

He will be available for interview in Adelaide on Thursday, September 15 from 9.30am – 11.30am.

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