

Mr. Norm Anderton's Address on the occasion of the unveiling and dedication of a plaque in honour of the Doctors and Dentists who served the POWs held on captivity by the Japanese during World War II

With the Fall of Singapore, 68 years ago on this date over some fifteen and a half thousand Australians became prisoners of the Imperial Japanese Army, followed soon after by over 1000 each from Ambon, Timor and Rabaul.

Over 62,000 British, Australian and Dutch prisoners of war (9,500 Australians) and an estimated 270,000 Asian labourers) were sent to build a Railway 415km from Thanbyazayt in Burma to Kanchanaburi in lower Thailand working from over 100 camps in squalid conditions.

Over 30% (Two thousand seven hundred) Australians died as a result of starvation, diseases, tropical ulcers and ill treatment. That number would have been significantly higher were it not for the dedicated work of the Doctors who worked in appalling conditions with little or no medicine and a meager quantity on surgical instruments.

Unfortunately, and it is unfortunate, that outside the P.O.W. community, most people seem only to have heard of one doctor, Lt.Col. Dr "Weary" Dunlop. I have no wish to denigrate the work he did and acknowledge he deserves all the acclaim he received.

I just wish to put things in perspective. "Weary" was one of 43 Australian Doctors and 6 Dentists who worked on the Railway, and although in some circles he was accorded the title of "Surgeon of the Jungle" he performed few operations himself while other Australian doctors including Capt Dr Frank Cahill performed over 40 amputations at the so called hospital Camp at Tan Baya in Burma and Lt Col (Dr) Albert Coats performed over 120, also in Burma.

"Weary" was also a great Administrator and his work in this area brought order and discipline to the Camp he administered but so was Dr Bruce Hunt, a West Australian who administered a large camp for around 1800 sick men at Tan Baya in Burma; but hardly anyone seems to have heard of him.

"Weary" also copped his share of bashings and was undoubtedly a very brave man who did all he did to prevent sick men being sent out to work, but so did Capt (Dr) Roy Mills who was unfortunate to be in a Camp run by a monster, one of the most sadistic and cruel Camp Commanders on the Railway, Capt. Mureyama who was later convicted as a War Criminal. The bashings Roy received seriously affected his health after returning to work as a doctor in Australia after the War.

We are here today including 7 of 11 survivors who worked on the Railway and live in the Gold Coast and District and whose names are listed in the Programme, to recognize and honour all those Doctors and Dentists whose names appear on this Plaque and we are greatly honoured to have with us today Dr Peter Hendry, who at 94 years of age is one of only three of those Doctors still alive.

And it is my pleasure to call on Mick Kildey. Who was a member of Dr Hendry's Unit (the 2/10 Field Ambulance) and to whom we owe a debt of gratitude for personally presenting this Plaque to come forward and introduce Dr Hendry and invite him to unveil the Plaque

Names of the survivors of the Burma/Thailand Railway Living in the Gold Coast/District Area

Norm Anderton	8 th Division Signals	John Miller.	2/10 th Fld. Regiment
Merv Cox	No 1 Coy A.A.S.C.	George Munro	H.M.A.S.Perth
Jim Curson	Royal Engineers	Harry Nesbitt	2/10 th Fld. Regiment
Norm Huntley	2/26 th Battalion	Gerald Rosenberg	85 th L.A.Detachment
Gordon Jamieson	2/26 th Battalion	Ted Whitmore	2/29 th Battalion
Noel Jensen	2/29 th Battalion		

Footnote.

The figures quoted in this Address related to the number of POW's and the workforce on the Burma/Thailand Railway were taken from material provided by Dr Richard.E.Reid, Commemorative Activities Section Department of Veterans Affairs. Dr. Peter Stanley and Mr. Peter Burgess of the Australian War Museum and included in the booklet published for the National Reunion of ex Prisoners of War on the Gold Coast in 1997.