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REMOVAL OF TAX OFFSET ACTS AS INCENTIVE TO QUEENSLAND PRODUCTION COMPANY

Federal Member for McPherson Margaret May has welcomed the recent announcement by Senators Coonan and Kemp that a technical anomaly in the film tax offset will be removed

With the removal of the technical anomaly, more productions can claim the tax offset ultimately acting as an incentive for large-scale film productions to shoot in Australia.

The amendment will ensure that large-scale Australian films are not disadvantaged compared to international productions in accessing the benefits of the refundable tax offset.

Margaret May said: "I was recently approached by George Friend of Rising Sun Films Pty Ltd, a Queensland company, who is producing a film about the Kokoda campaign.

"The concept for the "Kokoda" film had generated considerable interest from offshore investors but the technical anomaly with the film tax offset threatened the production of the film in Australia and Thailand was being looked at as an option.

"Given the possibility that we could lose the film to Thailand I arranged for a meeting to take place in early August on the Gold Coast between George Friend and the Minister for the Arts and Sport (Senator Rod Kemp).

"Mr Friend stressed to Senator Kemp that the anomaly needed to be addressed immediately otherwise the production of this film was likely to go offshore and other films would follow suit.

"Senator Kemp and I undertook to do all we could and last week met with Senator Helen Coonan in Canberra who then expedited the rectifying of the anomaly.

MEDIA RELEASE

“The anomaly has been rectified with legislation by press release. The changes are retrospective and apply from 4 September 2001.

“The Kokoda campaign (which ran from mid July until early November 1942) is unique in Australia’s military history.

“The enormous physical challenge involved in military operations in central New Guinea in World War II are difficult to comprehend.

“The Kokoda Trail extends some 120km from modern day Buna on the north-east Papua New Guinea Coast to the fringes of the urban centre of Port Moresby.

“In 1942 this region was covered by heavy jungle, long grasses and swamp with intense heat, tropical downpours, snakes, mosquitos and all manner of tropical pests abounding. Because of the enormous variations in height of the mountains and the dense canopy cover, at night temperatures could fall to almost freezing.

“Unlike most military campaigns, everything for battle was required to be carried in on foot. And on most occasions, anyone wounded or made ill by disease had to be carried out by hand.

“Ten thousand Australians were involved in the campaign with 2,000 men being killed and dying from disease.

“By September 1942 the Australians had withdrawn to Imita Ridge, the last ridgeline before the coastal plain of Port Moresby. Lacking shovels with which to dig trenches, the Australians used their helmets and bayonets to prepare defensive positions. At Imita, in range of friendly artillery support, the Australians held.

“The campaign was of vital importance to Australia. If the Japanese had taken the airstrip at Port Moresby they could have bombed north-east Australia at will and caused thousands of casualties among men, women and children and disrupted life in the north for one hundred thousand Australians.

“I welcome the removal of the tax offset which will act as an incentive for production of the film “Kokoda” to remain on Australian soil” she said.