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The **Courier Mail**
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A woman in search
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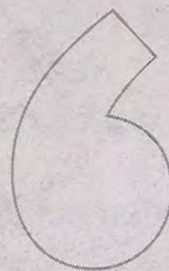
We will remember

Michael Lund

Profile

Richard Kirk

RICHARD Kirk was surprised to hear there was no national memorial to the thousands of Australians who died in World War I and World War II. "It shocked me actually," the Brisbane architect says. He'd seen memorials in many towns and cities across Australia to those locals who'd died in the wars, and always assumed there was a national memorial, somewhere. The Australian War Memorial, in Canberra, started out as a monument to the 416,809 Australians it says enlisted in World War I (1914-1918), with 331,781 serving overseas. But that was still being built in 1939 at the outbreak of World War II, with records saying a further 993,000 Australians enlisted, with 575,799 serving overseas. So the memorial's role was extended to cover both wars. Then came Korea, Malaya, Vietnam, the Gulf wars and the other conflicts in which Australians served, so the Australian War Memorial came to embrace them all. But when national memorials were then built for some of the individual conflicts, the two biggest wars of the 20th century somehow missed out on dedicated memorials. So, when an international competition was launched to design a national memorial, the architect was eager to take on the challenge. "It was always very much about filling the gap which Canberra has in terms of it's the only capital city that does not have World War I and II war memorials," Kirk says. "You realise that something was missing and, I think, there's a very important difference between a memorial structure and what the war memorial building does, or any other facility." In 2007, land was set aside on the banks of Lake Burley Griffin, at the end of Anzac Pde, down from the Australian War Memorial itself, and the Memorial(s) Design Committee began the search for a winning design. In February, Prime Minister Kevin Rudd announced that Kirk's team had beaten 42 other entries with a design described as "symbolic of the spirit, sacrifice and commitment of Australians during both world wars". Richard Kirk Architects has been involved in a number of projects, including the Cutting Edge offices in Brisbane's West End, several residential buildings and the design of the new ABC offices at South Bank. But winning the competition to build a national memorial is, for Kirk, 41,



I think a lot of people are brought up with this history in their family

probably his greatest achievement to date. Born in Roma, he was raised in Brisbane and his life was also touched by those who served in World War I. A grandfather he never knew braved the bloody battlefields of France and later died in peacetime when Kirk's father was only seven.

"I think a lot of Australians are brought up with this history in their family, of people who were involved," he says.

"If you think back to not only those who died but to those who came back severely disfigured, you're talking about a couple of hundred thousand people."

"Almost a whole generation and for such a small country like Australia the ongoing ramifications of the way that's felt, even today, is quite profound."

The challenge then was to design a memorial that would capture the impact the two wars had on a nation.

Kirk's design incorporates two 20m-tall monolithic stone blocks — one for each war — with shafts carved into the structures to act as markers for key dates and events.

At dawn on Anzac Day, the rising sun will shine through narrow shafts in the World War I memorial, and at 11am on November 11 (the 11th month) the sunlight will pass through even narrower shafts to mark the minute's silence on Remembrance Day.

Other shafts in the monuments are designed to cast light on the internal walls and across the ground near the structures.

There will also be a Garden of Memory and a Battlefield Wall noting some of the key battles Australians faced in the two wars.

"Richard Kirk's solution was really the best of the international competition," MDC chairman Mike Buick says. "It has many layers. It has a visual appeal from a distance and, as you get closer, you get more information. This should be a memorial that lasts for many hundreds of years."

But first it has to be built, and that takes money. The campaign now is to raise the estimated \$21 million needed, roughly one dollar for each Australian alive today. It's not much to ask given the sacrifice made by so many Australians. The Australian Government has committed \$250,000, with the rest to come from public and corporate donations.

For Kirk it marks the realisation of a rare opportunity to contribute something to the nation. "It's taken years to get these opportunities," he says. "Unfortunately, they don't come around as often as they should, so you try to make the most of them when they do."

"This project, from my point of view, is certainly a highlight. We are incredibly honoured to be given an opportunity to do such a project of national significance."

For more details on how to donate to the Memorial(s) Development Committee, call James Morris on 0414 652 560, e-mail treasurer@mdc.org.au or visit mdc.org.au



FILLING a gap ... Richard Kirk, top, is designing overdue memorials to two world wars.

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By Wasserman, Deniro & Leigh

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CALL BACKS: Monday May 4th 2009

Requirements: A prepared monologue of Classic theatre (pre 1980) – 1 to 2 mins; a prepared song with backing (either CD, tape or sheet music) – NOT from the show.

This production requires a cast of varied age M and F – accepting cast from 15 years up.

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Image (detail): Paul Adair Rock Pool
(from Three-Hole Mountain Inn), 2008 Pigment print
Courtesy of the artist and Stills Gallery, Sydney

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