

Off on the 75th Kokoda trek

By Alana Mitchelson

TWO deserving high school students have been named recipients of the Harold Bould Kokoda Award, and will tackle the Kokoda trek during next year's winter holiday break.

This year's winners Pakenham Secondary student Mehdi Ahmadi and Emerald Secondary College's Jared Copey were presented their award by Alan Jameson of the 39th Battalion Association on Thursday 1 December at Member for Eastern Victoria Region Edward O'Donoghue's Pakenham office.

The award is open each year to Year 10 students studying within the shire and aims to highlight the importance of the Kokoda Campaign and aims to keep this historical event alive.

Applicants submit an essay about the event's significance, followed by a panel interview if shortlisted.

Pakenham Secondary College teacher David Telford said this topic would be a challenge to most students, let alone Mehdi who emigrated from Kabul, Afghanistan, two years ago without even a basic grasp of the English language.

Settling into his new homeland raised his interest in Australia's history. The stories on mateship, survival and sacrifice have intrigued Mehdi and fed his admiration of these historical events.

"Mehdi is always very quick to step up and challenge himself," Mr Telford said.

"He has extraordinary leadership qualities, and this award is an incredible achievement considering how language-heavy this competition was."



Janet Copey, Sohaila and Aref Admadi, Member for Bass Brian Paynter, Emerald Secondary College principal Jodie Doble, award recipients Jared Copey and Mehdi Ahmadi, David Telford, Pakenham Secondary College principal Ray Squires and Alan Jameson. 162637

Mehdi said he was hoping to learn what the soldiers went through, what they did to keep safe and keep their country safe.

Jared was due to walk the Kokoda Track with Emerald Secondary College this year, but due to an injury sustained playing sport, he was unable to participate.

He was happy that he will now have the chance to do so.

The year 2017 will mark the 75th anniversary of the 39th Battalion B Company's first crossing of the Kokoda Track which commenced on 7 July, 1942.

Mehdi and Jared will be wearing World War II clothing and eating WWII rations during their trek.



The 39th Battalion Association vice-president Alan Jameson with Jared Copey and Emerald Secondary School principal Jodie Doble. 162637



Emerald Secondary College student Jared Copey and Pakenham Secondary College Meddi Ahmadi. 162637 Picture: STEWART CHAMBERS

