

# MEDIA RELEASE

2 February 2016



## ***Australian Red Cross: Reconnecting loved ones through the decades Exhibitions at the State Library***

For a century, Australian Red Cross has been reconnecting loved ones separated by war, conflict, disaster and migration. The State Library of South Australia, together with Australian Red Cross, is showing two exhibitions acknowledging this important work and sharing the stories of those who have been helped by Australian Red Cross.

On display for the first time is a selection of original correspondence between families and the South Australian Red Cross Information Bureau. The ***South Australian Red Cross Information Bureau Collection*** exhibition outlines the history of the Bureau and how these valuable records came to be part of the State Library's digitised collection. This historic collection of correspondence is now available to all via the State Library's website - [www.slsa.sa.gov.au/saredcrossww1](http://www.slsa.sa.gov.au/saredcrossww1).

From 1916 until 1919, the Bureau researched more than 8,000 enquiries from family and friends of missing Australians fighting in WWI. Packets were created for each inquiry and contained:

- information about the soldier
- letters from the requesting family
- eyewitness statements about the soldier's last known whereabouts and
- in most cases, the resulting information on the fate of the soldier.

Alan Smith, Director State Library of South Australia, comments, "The digitisation of the Bureau Collection is one of the most significant projects the State Library has undertaken in recent years.

We are proud to be able to make these important records searchable and more accessible to the public.”

Also featured in this exhibition are the stories of South Australians who served in WWI and how the Bureau helped their families uncover what happened to their loved one.

From the battlefields of WWI and WWII, through post-war migration, disasters and to current conflicts, the Australia Red Cross International Tracing Service has helped thousands of people reconnect or know the fate of their loved ones. The exhibition, ***The right to know: 100 years of the Australian Red Cross International Tracing Service***, showcases the history of this invaluable service and tells the stories of those it has helped.

Rosalie Pace, Acting Executive Director (Red Cross SA) explains, “The Red Cross International Tracing Program has for many years helped find loved ones again, re-united families and clarified the fate of the missing. Red Cross is networked across the globe and can search for the missing worldwide. The stories that unfold are moving and challenging and show the strength of family love and belonging.”

Together the exhibitions highlight the importance of volunteers in our community and the contribution they make. Just as both these Red Cross services used volunteers back in 1916, the State Library continued this tradition using volunteers to make the heart-warming and historic stories of missing Australians fighting in WWI more accessible. Today Australian Red Cross, as does the State Library, continues to rely on volunteers to help with their work.

Both exhibitions are on display in the Institute Gallery at the State Library of South Australia until 27 March 2016. For more information about the exhibitions and the history of the tracing service, visit [www.redcross.org.au/tracingcentenary](http://www.redcross.org.au/tracingcentenary).

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## EXHIBITION DETAILS:

14 January – 27 March 2016  
Open 10am – 5pm daily (closed public holidays)  
Institute Gallery, Institute Building  
Corner North Terrace and Kintore Avenue  
Free entry  
[www.redcross.org.au/tracingcentenary](http://www.redcross.org.au/tracingcentenary)

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