Outline what you consider to be the significance, if any, of the events that occurred in 1916 in both Pozières and Mouquet Farm and whether their commemoration should attract greater attention in Tasmania during 2016.
‘Impressed itself on the minds of the members of the 1st Division’ — that phrase suggests that there was something about what happened to Australian soldiers here in 1916 that would forever live vividly in their memories of the war (Department of Veterans’ Affairs, 2013).

Escaping the consciousness of the majority of Australians, are the events that occurred in both Pozières and Mouquet Farm in 1916. In today’s world if someone was to ask an Australian ‘What is Pozières?’ the most likely answer would be a confused look and a ‘What?’. The lack of knowledge by the Australian public of the events that took place in the Mouquet Farm and Pozières campaigns is contributing to the insufficient commemoration. With more than 23,000 casualties at Pozières, it was considered one of Australia’s costliest battles. With a heart shattering number of deaths yet little to no money supplied by the Australian government, how is the public to know of such events? Unless these historic and heroic stories are told and shared in schools, in another 100 years’ times the names Pozières and Mouquet Farm will be unheard of, completely.

Australian soldiers were sent to Pozières to capture key positions; unfortunately, this resulted in the deaths of many in the 1st and 2nd Divisions. Almost as many Australians died in Pozières as did in Gallipoli (Simon Royal, 2016) with between 6,000 and 8,000 Australian soldiers dying in Pozières. On 7 August 1916, Australian soldiers were forced to withstand the German attempt to take Pozières once and for all through vigorous artillery blitzes. Although the subjugation of Pozières was seen as a military success by the British, the Australians censured their commander for permitting the continuation of attacking when there was such a high casualty rate. The number of casualties at Pozières was 23,000 (AWM London) and is far greater than that of Fromelles which occurred some weeks earlier with 5,500 (Australian War Memorial), and ‘where Australia had it’s worst day in history’ (Peter Barnes, 2016). The windmill in Pozières, is an iconic location of Pozières because there, many Australians lost their lives. As Charles Beans states, Pozières ‘is more densely sown with Australian sacrifice than any other place on earth’ and ‘the cost in Australian lives had been enormous.’

Mouquet Farm, located just north of Pozières, France, was a place that saw the deaths of many Australians. What is also known as ‘Moo Cow Farm’ by the Australian diggers, is where the Battle of Mouquet Farm unravelled. Part of the Battle of Somme, the Australian Imperial Force (AIF) had 10,976 casualties in a mere four weeks. The 16th Battalion which arrived on 8 August 1916, took its first step on the battlefield since being evacuated from Gallipoli on 18-19 December 1915. The Western Australians who made up the Battalion, were one of the initial Gallipoli battalions which arrived on 25 April 1915, suffering from 834 casualties during the eight months. When compared to the loss at Mouquet Farm, there were 637 casualties; practically two thirds of the Battalion were devastated, in a much shorter period of time. How could a place so rich with Australian blood become forgotten and unknown only a hundred years on? ‘Mouquet Farm has become a footnote to Pozières, which itself has become nothing more than another insignificant sideshow in the carnage of the Battle of the Somme’ (Patrick Maloney, 2005).
By the end of 1916, Australian soldiers on the Western Front had suffered 40,000 deaths (Department of Veterans’ Affairs, 2013). So many deaths, yet a hundred years on its commemoration has fallen short. People are unaware of the events that took place in both Mouquet Farm and Pozières in 1916, rather focusing on places such as Gallipoli, Lone Pine and Anzac Cove. Gallipoli suffered from 26,111 casualties with 8,141 Australian deaths in the course of eight months. Lone Pine lost over 2,000 Australian soldiers, and at Anzac Cove, on the day the Australian soldiers landed, more than 620 were killed. Comparing the numbers, the total number of deaths at Gallipoli was 8,709, while the AIF on the Western Front lost 46,000 and had 132,000 wounded. Was it the devastation bestowed upon the Australian soldiers when they arrived on the shores of Gallipoli that made it so highly commemorated? Was it that they entered the ships with confidence yet landed with instant despair? How was Gallipoli so different from Pozières when it was Australian blood shed upon the land?

They’re not heroes. They do not intend to be thought or spoken of as heroes. They’re just ordinary Australians, doing their particular work as their country would wish them to do it. And pray God, Australians in days to come will be worthy of them (C. E. W. Bean).

The ANZAC legend was brought to life on 25 April 1915 in Gallipoli. Even though there was not a military victory, the Australian soldiers who fought there were commended for their bravery, initiative, endurance, will power and mateship. Bill Gammage mentions in his novel The Broken Years that ‘mateship was a particular Australian virtue, a creed, almost a religion’ (p. 195) that assisted them in standing as a unified campaign. These characteristics were then seen as the formation of the ANZAC spirit. Yet again, focus was put on Gallipoli, some 3,000 kilometres away from Pozières. The eight-month struggle of Gallipoli was considered more Australian than the two-week travesty of Pozières. But why were the events of Lone Pine, Anzac Cove and Gallipoli held up on a pedestal as the foundations of the Australian national identity and the events that occurred on the Western Front completely forgotten? For Dr Peter Stanley, Gallipoli is nationhood and ‘Gallipoli, a minor, failed campaign (which cost less than a sixth of the Australian deaths on the Western Front) fulfils a need felt by many Australians to connect with or express their national identity’ (2008). According to Honest History approximately $552 million of mostly federal, state and territory money for the four years of ANZAC 100 commemoration will be spent. Yet, in 2014 the government assigned Pozières a mere $235,000 to simply upkeep the trails and visitor facilities (Bailey, 2016). Perhaps the lack of teaching, advertising and commemorating of events such as those in Pozières and Mouquet Farm are the reasons the majority of Australians have never heard their names. Whatever is not taught in schools and whatever is not broadcast on television for millions to see is unworthy, forgotten.

Even philosophers will praise war as ennobling mankind, forgetting the Greek who said: ‘War is bad in that it begets more evil than it kills. (Immanuel Kant)

Those who fought valiantly throughout the events occurring on the Western Front were the Australian soldiers. Is it not the families of such men that deserve to have their loved ones commemorated? Do they not deserve to mourn their losses just as those who lost a
member in the Gallipoli campaign? How was Australia able to forget such men, who volunteered to serve their country? At Pozières there were many bodies found with unknown identities; they are entitled to recognition for their contribution and courage. Human beings yearn to be remembered. So when an Australian soldier dies for their motherland, they deserve and have a right to be remembered. Lest We Forget, a common ANZAC Day term that everyone associated with Gallipoli, and from a young age are taught hand in hand with the events in 1915 and no others. Tasmania’s dead brothers in Pozières deserve to be commemorated. One hundred years on and hardly a word spoken on the news, hardly a single soul mentions the words ‘Pozières’ or ‘Mouquet Farm’ on July 23. At that very time in 1916, Tasmanian soldiers were on the Western Front in the French trenches. While the 40th Battalion was at war, family members waited for their loved ones to return, unharmed and safe, many did not experience this.

_The soldiers that didn’t come back were the heroes. It’s a roll of the dice. If a bullet has your name on it, you’re a hero. If you hear a bullet go by, you’re a survivor._ (Bob Feller)

Tasmania, Australia, the British Empire should all join forces to commemorate all those lost and all those who partook in the events of World War I. Pozières and Mouquet Farm are but merely two places that have been repressed from Australia’s conscience. The year that was, 1916, saw many deaths especially those of Australians fighting as allies of Britain. However, this dark and difficult time allowed their mateship and outstanding military qualities to shine, being remembered as the ANZAC legend. Bravery is not something that can easily be forgotten, death is something that should not easily be forgotten and the ANZACs should never be forgotten. Pozières and Mouquet Farm deserve to live on in the hearts of Tasmanians.

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