



Hi-tech ... modern touch for heritage hall

## Glass fire dome for Town Hall

SYDNEY'S historic Town Hall will be fire-proofed with the construction of an octagonal glass pyramid.

"The bullet-proof glass structure will be put in the ceiling of the building's main lobby to seal the upper levels from fire.

"A recent risk assessment study ... found that smoke from a fire in the lobby may travel into the upper levels of Town Hall and affect fire escapes," a council spokesman said.

The glass structure will separate the levels and contain smoke and heat to the lobby, should a fire occur.

"The dome would not affect the building's heritage significance.

The spokesman said the dome is proposed to be "unobtrusively located above the existing chandelier and would not affect the building's heritage significance".

He said the structure will be bullet-proof to protect it from any explosions caused by a fire.

The public will still have access to Central Hall during construction.

The council has called tenders for the project.

## Hammock ball injuries

A BOY suffered serious head and back injuries yesterday after he fell out of a hammock.

The 10-year-old boy was relaxing on a hammock hung up on the concrete patio at his parents' home at Schofields in Sydney's northwest. It broke about 5.30pm and he crashed to the ground, sustaining multiple injuries.

A NSW CareFlight spokesman said the boy suffered a head wound, suspected back fracture and a fractured left arm in the 2m fall. He was flown to hospital.

# Arson at RSL leads to walk on sacred ground Flag burner on the Kokoda Track



Final steps to redemption ... flag-burner Ali Ammar started the gruelling 10-day Kokoda Track hike in Papua New Guinea early yesterday

## EXCLUSIVE

By JUSTIN VALLEJO

FROM BURNING the Australian flag and offending the memory of our fallen Diggers to following their footsteps on the Kokoda Track.

A Sydney teenager started on a 110km trek through dense Papua New Guinea jungle yesterday after critics said he could never learn the values of the flag he so infamously desecrated.

In the wake of the Cronulla riots, Ali Ammar — who can today be identified for the first time with the consent of him and his family — stole the Australian flag from the Brighton-le-Sands RSL Club and set it alight.

There was outrage when Mr Ammar was offered a flag-bearer's position in the Anzac Day parade as part of an ambitious plan by NSW RSL president Don Rowe to help turn the teenager's life around.

"When that story came out there was a lot of anger by people who saw it as some sort of reward and said, 'Go make him walk the Kokoda Track instead'," Mr Rowe said. "When the

110km Kokoda Track is physically tough — but it is more of a mental challenge.

"You don't know where it finishes, you are up early and to bed late. You are tired and it is wet.

I did it when I was 20 with some of my Swans teammates, including Brett Kirk, Amon Buchanan, Leo Barry and Adam Goodes.

It was tough but it wasn't like we had anybody shooting at us. We weren't defending our country like the Diggers were doing back then.

"What we have today, the freedom, the great lifestyle, the great country is on the back of what these guys did.

chance to actually do that came along he was very keen and excited about it.

"It will give him a great appreciation about what young Australians his age suffered during the war."

Mr Ammar, 18, has embraced the walk and trained every day over

## Trek to greater appreciation



Ryan O'Keefe Swans star who has walked the Track

When you get to the end, you are thinking, 'I'm just stoked to finish it'.

But the benefits are delayed. It is when you reflect a week, a month or even a year later that you realise what a good thing it was to have accomplished — when you realise how good we have it in Australia. The simple things in life are so easy for us today.

the past few months so he can do it justice.

The walk began with about 20 other young men and women, some with similarly checkered pasts and others identified by the RSL for the Kokoda Youth Leadership Challenge.

Hassan Ammar said the family was in tears as his nephew left on Monday for the 10-day hike.

"We're so happy that this has all turned around for him. He has been in so much trouble in the past three years," he said.

"But now he is ready to put his hand up and take responsibility. He is not ashamed of who he is any more.

"Everybody does mistakes but we're way beyond all that trouble now and the family is much closer because of it."

By taking part he is required to make a commitment to community service as a form of repayment.

This is on top of legal sanctions for the 2005 flag-burning, including an apology to the RSL members.

RSL & Services Clubs Association boss Graeme Carroll said the trek was not about more punishment.

"This is about showing him other ways to live," Mr Carroll said.

## Daily Telegraph

Give your verdict on the flag burner's Kokoda trek

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