

national snapshot

MH 17 DISASTER



SHATTERED: Rin Norris and Anthony Maslin at yesterday's memorial service and, below, with their children Otis, Mo and Evie.

EMILY MOULTON

"THE only thing worse than the hell beyond hell we are going through is the horrific thought that our family may have never existed."

These were the heartbreaking words from Anthony Maslin who, with his distraught wife Rin Norris and their families, said goodbye to their three "perfect souls" and guiding light, father Nick Norris.

Mr Norris and his grandchildren Mo, Evie and Otis Maslin, 12, 10 and 8, were on board flight MH17 when it was shot down over Ukraine two weeks ago.

Yesterday, hundreds of mourners gathered at Perth's Scotch College to celebrate the lives of the three children and their doting grandfather.

Mr Maslin, or "Mas" as he is known to his friends, told those at the private service that despite his unbearable loss, he would choose the "short time"



he had with them "over any normal, long-lasting life."

"Our three children are unblemished, innocent and perfect souls. They are our whole world," he added.

For nearly two hours, guests heard cherished anecdotes of "Mo-man", "Otie" and "Evie" and wise old Nick, whose "neglectful" parenting style instilled a sense of independence among his four children.

A heartbroken Rin, who tried to remain composed as best she could, read out the exact amount of time she had the "honour" of being Mr Norris's daughter and the mum to her beloved children.

She spoke of how they taught her more about life than she could have ever imagined and relished being able to comfort them in their time of need by giving them cuddles.

Sobbing uncontrollably, she then told guests how she screamed for her

children when she learned she had lost them forever and how she could not bear the thought she could never touch them again.

"When their innocent bodies were shot out of the sky I stretched my arms as high as I could and screamed for them," she said.

"Now I see them only in my head. I can't touch them, I can't feel their warmth, I can't imagine the memories of their bodies close to mine and the love in my heart will always be open for them."

"My arms will always be reaching for them."

Throughout the service, images from precious family moments were shown on big projector screens while music, which was a big part of the Maslin household, played in the background. Ms Norris's brother Brack then spoke of their father, describing him as a "great man" who was "awesome" in his eyes.

Shelling threat to recovery mission

PAUL TOOHEY
in Donetsk

BOMBS landed only 500m from the Malaysia Airlines recovery mission as it made its way to the crash site for a third full day of searching.

Vehicles in the humanitarian convoy shook as several incoming bombs landed behind the convoy as it entered rebel-held territory.

The convoy proceeded to a new location to the southwest of the site, near the village of Rassypnoe.

This is the area where the cockpit of MH17 crashed to Earth. There are believed to be numerous human remains at this site.

Media were denied the opportunity to observe the Australian and Dutch team at their work, but this is understood to be a key location both for what the Australians call "the remaining remains" and to gather ballistic evidence on how the plane was shot down on July 17.

The foreign teams negotiate each morning with the Ukrainian army and rebels to travel from their new base in Soledar through to the crash site. The fragility of the arrangement was evident from the near-miss bombing.

The team is now fully equipped with Belgian shepherd sniffer dogs, forensic experts and cold trucks which have begun transporting remains to Kharkiv, in the northeast of Ukraine, and on to Amsterdam.

The searchers are working in the middle of a war zone as the Ukrainian army fights rebels in the Donetsk People's Republic.

Recipe for a smooth passing of baton

MIKE COLMAN

PUT together a songbird, a surfer and a kid. Add a gold medal athlete, mix some dancers, singers and season with hi-tech razzle-dazzle. Shake vigorously for 10 minutes and serve up to a few million people.

It's called the Gold Coast Sundae, and it was the sweet that followed yesterday morning's main course, the Commonwealth Games closing ceremony at Glasgow's Hampden Park.

Following the official handover from Glasgow 2014 to Gold Coast 2018, the Aussie team was given a narrow window in which to state its case: this is who we are, this what



RIGHT MIX: Jessica Mauboy prepares for the closing ceremony with the Gold Coast 2018 team.

Picture: ADAM HEAD

we have to offer, and this is what we're going to deliver.

So they called in the heavyweights. The show was planned, choreographed and directed by David Atkins, the

creator of the hit show *Hot Shoe Shuffle* and artistic director of the opening and closing ceremonies at the 2000 Sydney Olympics.

To present the Gold Coast

to the world he enlisted the talents of award-winning singer and actor Jessica Mauboy and Coast locals, champion surfer Mick Fanning, 10-year-old schoolboy Gabe Pither (whose father Cameron represented Australia in rugby sevens at the 1998 and 2002 Commonwealth Games) and gold medal winning hurdler Sally Pearson.

They had a hard act to follow. The Glasgow segment of the ceremony featured its own Australian flavour with an appearance by global singing superstar Kylie Minogue. But Gold Coast Commonwealth Games chief executive Mark Peters is confident his team still scored the first gold medal of the 2018 Games.

Aussie ceremony marks first shot fired in WWI

THE first shot fired by the British Empire in World War I wasn't on the battlefields of Europe – it came from a wind-swept fort south of Melbourne, half a world away. That moment – 100 years ago tomorrow – will be marked with a ceremony at the former military base where a 24-year-old Australian soldier fired on the German merchant ship, *SS Pfalz*, which was attempting to flee Melbourne less than four hours after hostilities began.

The ceremony is one of a national series marking the centenary of World War I.

John Purdue, a sergeant with the army's Royal Australian Garrison Artillery, was

stationed at Fort Nepean at the tip of the Mornington Peninsula.

At 12.45pm on August 5, 1914, he was ordered to fire on the *Pfalz* to stop it from escaping Port Phillip Bay to the open sea. The ship, which was carrying German consular officials and contraband, was captured and used as an Australian troop ship throughout the war.

Its crew was interned as prisoners of war.

A service to mark the 100th anniversary of John Purdue's historic act will be held at the old officer cadet school at Portsea, now in the Point Nepean National Park, from 11am tomorrow.