

ANZAC DAY 2023
ADDRESS BY
HER EXCELLENCY THE HONOURABLE BARBARA BAKER AC
GOVERNOR OF TASMANIA
HOBART CENOTAPH, TUESDAY 25 APRIL 2023

Good morning. I warmly welcome you all to our annual Anzac Day commemorations.

I acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land on which we are gathered. I also pay my respects to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men and women who have contributed to the defence of Australia in times of peace and war.

On this day, we remember all those who had to face war, all our fallen soldiers, our nurses and support staff, all who paid the ultimate price in service of their country.

May we also remember the war that is being waged in the Ukraine. Thousands of lives have been lost on both sides. We hope for an end to the conflict; we hope for peace in the region.

Anzac Day commemorates the ANZACs of 1915 and all those who follow in their footsteps.¹ The Anzac Day anniversary of the landing at Gallipoli has evolved to also commemorate the lives of those who died in the Second World War, and those who lost their lives in all military and peacekeeping operations in which our Nation has been involved,² serving in conflicts such as Korea, Vietnam, Borneo, Malaya and more recently in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Significantly, this year marks the 50th anniversary since Australia's commitment in the Vietnam War. We remember all those who died and were wounded in this war.

¹<https://www.awm.gov.au/commemoration/anzac-day> accessed 25 Feb 22

² <https://www.awm.gov.au/commemoration/anzac-day/traditions> accessed 25 Feb 22

This year also marks the Centenary of Legacy, which “grew from the ashes of WW1”³. It is reported that in the trenches of the Western Front during World War I, a soldier said to his dying mate, “I’ll look after the missus and kids.” This became known as The Promise.

Returned soldiers decided that they would provide help to widows and children. There was no formal government assistance. Our State led the way in this help, when in 1923, Major General Sir John Gellibrand founded the first Remembrance Club in Hobart.⁴

Legacy continues to support significant numbers of widows, children and dependants across Australia. I recognise and thank all Legatees for your care and voluntary work.

May I return to the Gallipoli campaign, which brought home the reality of the horror of war, resulting in over 8,000 Australian deaths and over 26,000 wounded.

The Gallipoli campaign was a military failure, yet our ANZACS displayed bravery, endurance, loyalty to mates, and sacrifice.

One month after the commencement of that campaign, an “unusual” event occurred on 24 May 1915; an official truce was agreed, unusual because an official truce was never repeated during the Great War.⁵

The truce occurred because so many men on both sides had been killed in the “no man’s land” between the opposing trench lines. It was impossible to recover or bury bodies due to machine-gun fire or shelling. The bodies of several hundred troops, mostly Australian, lay on the hillsides above what became known as Anzac Cove. From the early hours of 19 May, the Turks attacked in waves along the Anzac line of trenches. Around 3,000 Turkish troops died.⁶

³ Ibid

⁴ <https://www.legacy.com.au/aboutus>, accessed 7/4/2023.

⁵ <https://www.anzacmemorial.nsw.gov.au/24-may-truce-gallipoli>, page 6 accessed 5/04/2023.

⁶ <https://www.anzacmemorial.nsw.gov.au/24-may-truce-gallipoli>, page 2 accessed 5/04/2023.

Corpses lay bloating in the heat. The stench soon became unbearable and threatened the outbreak of disease.⁷ There were attempts of negotiations for the dead to be buried. On 23 May, “a Turkish officer was led blindfolded on a mule along a beach south of Anzac to begin a protracted negotiation at Anzac headquarters.”⁸

An agreement was reached. Hostilities were to be suspended for nine and a half hours on 24 May. “...On the call of the bugle all firing ceased on both sides...Heads began to appear above the trenches...”⁹ Shovels and picks were used to bury the dead. It is reported “... many later spoke of how the ordeal haunted them.”¹⁰

This was the first time that men on both sides had come face to face. Australians were seen trying to carry on a conversation with Turks a few feet away.¹¹ “It was quite a common sight to see an Aussie cutting a button from a Turk’s coat, while the Turk was doing the same to him.”¹²

Amongst the horror, there was a pause of the fighting, some sense of humanity. For this short pause, they could see their enemy as men, rather than a faceless enemy.¹³

At 4.30 pm, the Australians went back to their trenches and ten minutes later, on the sound of the bugle, heavy firing recommenced, and the men settled back to general warfare again.

Over 60,000 Australians were killed in WWI. 2,432 Tasmanians died, including six Tasmanian Aboriginal men from Cape Barren Island.¹⁴

The aftermath was felt acutely. The loss of so many young men had a profound impact on their communities.

⁷ Ibid page 2.

⁸ Ibid, page 3.

⁹ Tasmania's war record, 1914-1918 https://nla.gov.au/tarkine/nla.obj-2856322100_p52 accessed 13 Apr 23

¹⁰ <https://www.anzacmemorial.nsw.gov.au/24-may-truce-gallipoli>, page 4 accessed 5/04/2023.

¹¹ Tasmania's war record, 1914-1918 https://nla.gov.au/tarkine/nla.obj-2856322100_p52 accessed 13 Apr 23

¹² Loc cit

¹³ <https://www.anzacmemorial.nsw.gov.au/24-may-truce-gallipoli> page 5

¹⁴ https://www.centenaryofanzac.tas.gov.au/history/tasmanian_aboriginal_soldiers accessed 25 Feb 22

Behind each loss was a tragedy. Each one left behind their families, dreams and hopes of a future. Their deaths or wounds broke families.¹⁵ The men who returned home were often not the same men who went to war. Many suffered physically or mentally.¹⁶ Many did not last long because of the after effects of injuries.¹⁷

May I read some of the poem, “Anthem for Doomed Youth” by Wilfred Owen, one of the finest Great War poets, who died in service in 1918, one week before the Armistice. This poem encapsulates the sadness of young lives lost in war.

“What passing-bells for these who die as cattle?
... no prayers nor bells;
Nor any voice of mourning save the choirs,—
The shrill, demented choirs of wailing shells;
And bugles calling for them from sad shires.

What candles may be held to speed them all?
Not in the hands of boys, but in their eyes
Shall shine the holy glimmers of goodbyes...”

On this Anzac Day, we do not seek to glorify or celebrate war. Rather, we remember all those who gave their lives or were wounded in service.

We honour them by affirming our desire and commitment to resolve conflicts diplomatically and peacefully, and to avoid armed conflict where possible, with war the last resort.

We will soon pause for the playing of the *Last Post* and *Reveille*. As we do, some will be thinking of loved family members; of friends; of fellow service colleagues. Some will be reflecting on the effects of war and what it means to them.

May we all acknowledge this Centenary of Legacy. May we thank all those who have served, all who currently serve and all who support them.

Lest we forget.

¹⁵ https://centenaryofanzactas.gov.au/historywomen_and_world_war1 accessed 30/3/2023 page 2.

¹⁶ Ibid page 3.

¹⁷ https://vvma.org.au/explore_units/74, page 2 accessed 3/04/2023.