

REMEMBRANCE DAY 2023
SPEECH BY
HER EXCELLENCY THE HONOURABLE BARBARA BAKER AC
GOVERNOR OF TASMANIA
HOBART CENOTAPH, SATURDAY 11 NOVEMBER 2023

Good morning, everyone. I thank you all for joining together as a community to commemorate this solemn occasion.

I begin by acknowledging all of the veterans and their families and friends here today. I also acknowledge all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men and women who have served in our Defence Force in times of peace and war.

Today, we recognise that conflicts continue to rage across our globe. The ongoing, high-intensity war in the Ukraine is now well into its second year, with little hope for speedy resolution. Tragically, we are witnessing the devastating loss of life in Israel and in Palestine, the death toll reported to exceed 10,000 people since 7 October.¹

In both current conflicts, young, and not so young, soldiers have been killed or wounded in large numbers. But, beyond the military losses, there have been, and continue to be, devastating losses among civilian populations. It is a defining feature of modern, urban warfare that civilians suffer deprivations and atrocities along with the fighting forces. Globally acknowledged and accepted rules of warfare are disregarded and ignored.

As we have done every year since the first Remembrance Day in 1919, we stand united on this sacred day that holds a special place in our national soul. We commemorate the end of the First World War with the formal cessation of hostilities on the 11th hour, of the 11th day, of the 11th month. We gather to remember the sacrifices and service of those who have served and in the uniform of our Nation. We also pay our respects to the courage, resilience, and unwavering commitment of the men and women who continue to serve, in the defence of our Nation.

¹ Guardian 7 November 2023.

As we observe this moment, we reflect upon our history. We remember the bravery and determination of those who faced the horrors of World War I. We remember our many young people, who ventured into foreign lands, not knowing the extent of the horrors that they would face.

When I travel around our State, it is a sobering fact that the cenotaphs and monuments that were dedicated at the end of the First World War tell a heartbreaking story. Many families lost multiple members. Most communities lost a significant portion of the population. The impact of that loss of life cannot be understated.

Remembrance Day is not only a day to remember the fallen. It is also a day to consider the families at home, who bore the immense burden of sending their loved ones into danger, those mothers and fathers, who waved goodbye to their sons, or daughters, or those who anxiously awaited their partners' return. The families left behind suffered when they failed to receive letters from their loved ones, not knowing where they were, or if they were safe, waiting anxiously for the post to arrive.²

In 1943, a mother wrote, "The strain of it all seems to crush the life out of me at times. Sometimes I think I shall never see my boy again and then at other times I think it can't be."³

These families are a testament to the profound sacrifices for our Nation.

We also remember the veterans who returned from conflicts around the world, their bodies and spirits marked by the scars of war. Their sacrifices did not end on the battlefield but continued in the battles they faced within themselves. We are inspired by their strength and resilience as they tried to rebuild their lives.

Today, as we especially remember those who made the ultimate sacrifice, let us also extend our gratitude to those who serve and have served. Their service and

² <https://anzacportal.dva.gov.au/stories/australians-wartime/those-homewho> also suffered from lack of news, page 1, accessed 27/10/2023.

³ Ibid, page 2.

sacrifice deserve our remembrance and also our support, our appreciation, and our unwavering commitment to their wellbeing.

This Remembrance Day serves as a sombre reminder that the world continues to face new and complex challenges. Conflict remains a danger to the global, rules-based order. Our servicemen and women are on duty around the world. They stand with our allies and on separate operations, far from home, in places from the Sudan to the Middle East, and throughout the Pacific. We pledge to support them, to honour their service, and to ensure they receive the respect, care, and opportunities they deserve.

As the Last Post plays, let us recommit to the ideals of peace and unity, and work to ensure that the sacrifices of our veterans were not in vain. We honour them by affirming our desire to resolve conflicts diplomatically, with war the last resort.

Lest we forget.