

**LAUNCH OF EMERITUS PROFESSOR STEFAN PETROW'S BOOK,
'TASMANIAN ANZACS: THOSE WHO SERVED, THEIR FAMILIES AND
THE IMPACT OF WORLD WAR ONE. VOL 1: THE 12TH AND
52ND BATTALIONS'**

ADDRESS BY

**HER EXCELLENCY THE HONOURABLE BARBARA BAKER AC
GOVERNOR OF TASMANIA**

FULLERS BOOKSHOP, HOBART, MONDAY 9 SEPTEMBER 2024

Good evening to you all. It is a great pleasure to be here to launch Emeritus Professor in History, Stefan Petrow's first of three volumes, entitled *TASMANIAN ANZACS: Those Who Served, Their Families and the Impact of World War One. Vol. 1 – The 12th and 52nd Battalions*.

May I begin by acknowledging the Muwinina people upon whose Country we gather. I acknowledge today's Tasmanian Aboriginal Community as ongoing custodians of Country. I recognise their enduring culture and deep connection to land, sea, and waters.

Emeritus Professor Stefan Petrow has had two complementary sides to his scholarly career as a librarian, then as a Professor in History in the School of Humanities. In both sides, he has always been the consummate researcher, with his interests focusing on all aspects of our Tasmanian history.

Stefan has received many scholarly awards and certificates, most recently, the Clive Lord Memorial Medal 2022 from our Royal Society of Tasmania for his outstanding contributions to Tasmanian history. He also has a host of awards for his teaching and community engagement.

He served as Head of the History and Classics Discipline for two periods, 2013 – 2015 and 2018 – 19. Since 2020, he has been an Emeritus Professor.

May I first mention that TASMANIAN ANZACS Vol. 1 is quite beautifully presented and published. This volume was locally produced here in our State, by Forty South Publishing Hobart, Tasmania. This is the first of the three planned commemorative Volumes, with two further Volumes to follow.

Stefan's work focuses on the contributions and experiences of Tasmanians who served in the Infantry Battalions during World War I and estimated to number 8,000.¹

Stefan notes that most war histories are about Australians, not specifically about Tasmanians, and most deal with a specific front, battle, individual, theme or a battalion.² So rather than do this, Stefan wanted to focus on the contributions and experiences of infantry battalions in which Tasmanians made up a significant proportion of soldiers.

In this first of three volumes, Stefan concentrates on the 12th and 52nd Infantry Battalions, and the contributions and experiences of the individuals who died, or who received or were recommended for awards. Stefan examined their service records and also those of siblings who served, and family responses. He records the individual stories of many of the Tasmanian ANZACS in the context of their families and the overall impact of World War One, the Great War. He also aims to recognise our Tasmanian soldiers' many contributions, that were often "rarely identified," and are "... rescued from a scholarly No Man's Land and become the centre of analysis and commemoration."³

Stefan's approach is to write about "feelings, impressions, experiences and moods," rather than about the events and facts of war.⁴ Stefan described to me that the stories of our soldiers provide the colour to the history and the War provides the canvas. To produce this colour, over many hours and twelve years on and off, Stefan read through innumerable letters and diaries of our Tasmanian soldiers, their comrades and families.

As Tasmania's highest-ranking Major-General, Sir John Gellibrand commented, "What the troops thought and believed" was equally significant, "as what they did," and this is what Stefan sets out to do and achieves successfully, in his 30 chapters and Conclusion.

The structure of the chapters in this first Volume, follows the specific engagements of the 12th Battalion across Gallipoli; Lone Pine; Lemnos; Pozieres, Mouquet Farm,

¹Page 3, "Reported in the Mercury 25 June 1919."

² Page 5.

³ Page 6.

⁴ Page 3.

Boursies before the dominance of the Western Front stand-off, which also enveloped the 52nd Battalion.

By recounting individual stories about our Tasmanian ANZACS, Stefan humanises the conflict, and recounts words and poems of soldiers and relatives of the dead. No doubt many readers will be moved to tears. Stories of mateship, bravery, illness, woundings, deprivations and horrors of war, and more provide insights into war by soldiers.

In the final chapter, Stefan writes about the experiences of our Tasmanians after the War, when waiting to return home, and the tensions that emerged. He also discusses their varied postwar experiences and their reintegration into civil society. It is very sad to read of the devastating physical and mental effects of war on returned soldiers, and to read that over 800 men were buried in unmarked graves.⁵

Stefan concludes that he believes that he has demonstrated how individuals experienced the war in different ways, and that his quotes from individual soldiers, comrades and families demonstrated, quote that "... the war had a complicated and variegated impact on individuals, families and local communities ...". Stefan also noted the "... mixed feelings ... over building ...-Hobart 's Cenotaph, 'Australia's first state war memorial'". He also cites Paul Keating's view that "real nobility and grandeur belongs not to empires or nations but to the people ..."⁶

Stefan's own conclusion is that "... so many Tasmanians from different walks of life, ... were made of the right stuff and embodied the best ANZAC traditions at considerable personal and familial cost."⁷

May I conclude and acknowledge that Emeritus Professor Stefan Petrow has published a magnificent, scholarly and very human account of Tasmanian ANZACS in the 12th and 52nd Battalions, and who experienced the horrors and losses of the Great War.

I now launch *TASMANIAN ANZACS: Those Who Served, Their Families and the Impact of World War One. Vol. 1: The 12th and 52nd Battalions.*

⁵ Page 348.

⁶ Page 475.

⁷ Page 479