

**HEADSTONE PROJECT DEDICATION OF NINE HEADSTONES  
TO FIRST WORLD WAR VETERANS  
SPEECH BY  
HER EXCELLENCY PROFESSOR THE HONOURABLE KATE WARNER AC  
GOVERNOR OF TASMANIA  
CORNELIAN BAY CEMETERY, MONDAY 6 NOVEMBER 2017**

Good morning everyone and thank you for inviting Dick and me to attend and participate in this dedication ceremony of nine headstones to First World War veterans.

I begin by also paying my respects to the traditional and original owners of this land — to pay respect to those that have passed before us and to acknowledge today's Tasmanian Aboriginal community who are the custodians of this land.

May I acknowledge Mr Jim Wilkinson, President of the Legislative Council; Members of State and Federal Parliament; Heads of Services, distinguished guests.

I am informed that the Tasmanian headstone project came about when it come to the attention of Families and Friends of the First Australian Imperial Force that there were First World War veterans lying in unmarked graves here at Cornelian Bay Cemetery and also in many other cemeteries around Tasmania.

As Captain Harling has said, there are over 500 unmarked graves found in Tasmania which includes four Aboriginal men who are buried at Carr Villa Memorial Park in Launceston and there may be more.

As many of you here today would know, the Tasmanian Headstone Project's mission is to ensure that these veterans are commemorated in an appropriate way at their burial sites through the provision of a simple pedestal headstone and a plaque.

In preparing to speak to you today, I have referred to the Headstone Project website which details the reasons why so many veterans lie in unmarked graves. The website reveals such reasons as: they were the last member of the family with no near relatives i.e. brothers or sisters; they had moved here from interstate or elsewhere and had no known family; they were estranged from family; the family were unaware that they needed to apply for a war grave; the family lacked sufficient education to fill in the paperwork and weren't given an assistance to do so; ineligibility for a Commonwealth funded war grave because the death was not war related including those who died in a vehicle accident or drowning; or the family was not in any financial position to afford a headstone at the time of death and the matter put aside until later.

According to the latest information provided by Andrea Gerard, the names of more than 30 men have been submitted to the Office of Australian War Graves for consideration for eligibility for an official war grave, which I understand requires that the person be classified as 'War Dead' i.e. they died before the end of August 1921, or that at the time of death, they were in receipt of the T.P.I. (Totally and Permanently Incapacitated) Pension.

I understand that the Office of War Graves has accepted 28 men as eligible and that the last of these graves was installed earlier this year. The Tasmanian Headstone Project has managed to provide headstones for the unmarked graves of more than 250 servicemen at Cornelian Bay and the plan is to have one for each of the estimated 320 by 2018.

But that is not the end of the project. It is estimated that there is at least another 200 or so World War One veterans lying in unmarked graves across the State.

The research involved in identifying these servicemen is considerable as is the documentation needed to apply for a Commonwealth funded grave. And then of course there is the labour and cost of materials for the headstone and money for the plaque.

I think the enormity of this project cannot be underestimated and I sincerely commend those involved.

As Governor I speak at many memorial services and ceremonies, including those on Anzac Day and Remembrance Day and have over the past three years in Office developed a deeper understanding of the sacrifices made by so many during and as a result of war.

I note that this project has an educational aspect to it with schools involved and links with the Frank McDonald essay competition. I must confess my knowledge of World War One as a schoolgirl was extremely limited, probably limited to what I gleaned from fiction, such as Mary Grant Bruce's Billabong books, *Jim and Wally* and *Captain Jim* in which the central character's (Norah's) big brother Jim and his friend Wally Meadows enlist in World War One; are later affected by poison gas on the Western Front and have to convalesce in Ireland. Interestingly, *Jim and Wally* was published in 1915 and contains one of the first accounts of Australian soldiers facing gas attacks on the Western Front.

The Headstones Project brings history to life for today's children and adults with details about the individual soldiers, just as *Jim and Wally* did for me and the plaques for the trees in the Soldiers Memorial Avenue do today on our Domain and other memorials such as the carved trees commemorating the seven residents of Legerwood near Ringarooma who lost their lives in World War One, which we visited last month.

What is special about the Headstones Project is that it is a tribute to those who did not die on the battlefield but who served and returned home to a nation in debt which struggled to provide jobs and affordable housing for returned servicemen and their dependents. And in the hardships of the Great Depression which followed from the late 1920s until at least the mid-1930s with 32% of Australians out of work. Reading their individual stories of these returned servicemen one wants to ask them what was it like returning to civilian society, trying to readjust and re-engage with family, friends and partners.

And, as I have touched on earlier, when these veterans died, for some, there was no money for a proper burial nor a headstone reflecting their military service, for others: they or their families didn't know or didn't have the skills

to apply for assistance for a headstone even if they qualified for one, and as we know many did not have those skills.

I am so glad that this project is putting right that wrong and honouring these men. It keeps the past in the present so that we will never forget their service.

Lest we forget.