

**AN ADDRESS ON REMEMBRANCE DAY BY THE HONOURABLE
PETER UNDERWOOD AC, GOVERNOR OF TASMANIA, HOBART
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This is what the Australian War Memorial has to say about today.

“At 11 am on 11 November 1918 the guns of the Western Front fell silent after more than four years’ continuous warfare. The allied armies had driven the German invaders back, having inflicted heavy defeats upon them over the preceding four months. In November the Germans called for an armistice (suspension of fighting) in order to secure a peace settlement. They accepted the allied terms of unconditional surrender.”

“The 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month attained a special significance in the post-war years. The moment when hostilities ceased on the Western Front became universally associated with the remembrance of those who had died in the war. This first modern world conflict had brought about the mobilisation of over 70 million people and left between 9 and 13 million dead, perhaps as many as one-third of them with no known grave. The allied nations chose this day and time for the commemoration of their war dead.”¹ (end of quote)

When the fighting was finally over, no-one could tell exactly how many had been killed but historians estimate that up to 10 million men

¹ <http://www.awm.gov.au/commemoration/remembrance/tradition/> accessed 31st October 2013

lost their lives on the battlefield - and another 20 million were wounded.²

The American President at the time of World War I, Woodrow Wilson infamously called it the “War to end all Wars.” This year marks the 95th anniversary of the end of that war. What have we learnt?

Exactly 2 weeks ago the Prime Minister went to Afghanistan to declare that Australia’s engagement in the longest war in which this country has been engaged was coming to an end. With respect to that war the Prime Minister said that “it was coming to an end not with victory, not with defeat, but with we hope an Afghanistan that’s better for our presence here.” Twelve years of war involving some 20,000 Australian men and women of our armed forces. Forty have died, 260 have been wounded, many more carry mental scars that may never heal but which will impose a crippling long term burden on them and the members of their families.³

In addition to the Australian deaths and injuries there were even more casualties amongst the troops from America and the other countries that joined in the Afghanistan conflict. As is the case with World War I no one seems to know how many Afghani civilians were killed, maimed, wounded or mentally crippled during the 12-year war. The best we can claim all that carnage has achieved is a hope that Afghanistan is a better place for it.

In Hyde Park Sydney on Palm Sunday 1982 the great Australian novelist and pacifist Patrick White read what he called a letter to

² http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/special_report/1998/10/98/world_war_i/198172.stm accessed 31st October 2013.

³ Supra.

humanity to a crowd estimated to number 40,000 in which he said, "Our work will not be done until we have eradicated the habit of war."

Today, on the 95th Anniversary of the end of the War to end all Wars we remember, and every day hereafter we must continue to remember those who were killed or died in past wars. Their work is done. We must not forget them for the memory of them and the manner of their passing should serve as a constant reminder that *our* work will not be done until we have eradicated the habit of war.

Lest we forget.