

**REMEMBRANCE DAY 2021**  
**ADDRESS BY**  
**HER EXCELLENCY THE HONOURABLE BARBARA BAKER AC**  
**GOVERNOR OF TASMANIA**  
**HOBART CENOTAPH, THURSDAY 11 NOVEMBER 2021**

I am honoured to be invited to deliver this address on Remembrance Day, our day of National commemoration.

I begin by acknowledging all the veterans of all Australia's wars who are here with us. I would also like to pay my respects to all the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men and women who have contributed to the defence of Australia.

This day is the anniversary of the Armistice that ended the four years of fighting Germany in World War I. That was, at the time, termed the war to end all wars.

According to the Imperial War Museum<sup>1</sup>, by the autumn of 1918 Germany and her allies were exhausted, their armies effectively defeated, and their population close to revolt due to widespread hunger. It became clear to the German high command that hostilities must cease.

An original approach for peace was made to the United States. Despite being a late entrant to the hostilities, United States' attitudes hardened considerably as their own losses mounted in engagements on the Western Front. German hopes for a 'peace without victory', as outlined by US President Woodrow Wilson earlier in 1918 were not realised. A more punitive peace agreement was eventually reached.

The Armistice negotiations were not conducted by the Allied governments but by their French Commander-in-Chief, Marshall Ferdinand Foch. He wanted to ensure that the Armistice conditions made it impossible for the German Army to recommence fighting. On 11 November 1918, the Armistice came into effect ending the war in Western Europe.

The Armistice was effectively a German surrender. Its conditions ended any possibility of Germany continuing the war. Similar agreements had already been signed by Germany's allies, Bulgaria, Turkey and Austria. The peace treaties which officially ended the Great War were not signed until 1919.

On 11 November each year, the anniversary of the Armistice, we acknowledge the 416,000 Australians who enlisted and the 62,000 Australians who died in World War I. Of those, 15,585 were Tasmanians who enlisted and 2,432, who lost their lives.<sup>2</sup> We

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.iwm.org.uk/history/how-did-the-armistice-end-the-first-world-war> accessed 29 Oct 21

<sup>2</sup> [https://www.utas.edu.au/library/companion\\_to\\_tasmanian\\_history/F/First%20World%20War.htm](https://www.utas.edu.au/library/companion_to_tasmanian_history/F/First%20World%20War.htm)

also acknowledge all those who died while serving Australia in wars, conflicts and peacekeeping operations.<sup>3</sup>

On the second anniversary of the Armistice in 1920, the commemoration was given added importance when it became a funeral, with the return from France of the remains of the original unknown soldier from the battlefields of the Western Front.<sup>4</sup> The remains were interred in Westminster Abbey in London on 11 November 1920. Four soldiers' remains had been returned from the British battlefields of the Somme, Aisne, Arras and Ypres. One was selected by General Louis Wyatt.

The selected unknown soldier is assumed to have been British, although he might have been a Canadian, New Zealander, or even an Australian. He was intended to represent all the young soldiers of the British Empire, killed during the Great War. On the same date, an unknown French soldier was buried below the Arc de Triomphe in Paris. Several other allied nations adopted the tradition of entombing unknown soldiers of their own.<sup>5</sup>

Plans to honour an unknown Australian soldier were first proposed in the 1920s. It was not until 1993 that, finally, one was brought home.

To mark the 75th anniversary of the end of the First World War, the remains of an unknown Australian soldier were exhumed from a First World War military cemetery near Villers Bretonneux in France and brought home to Australia.

Our Unknown Australian Soldier was interred in the Hall of Memory at our Australian War Memorial on 11 November 1993. We have a Tasmanian connection to our Unknown Soldier. He was buried with a bayonet and a sprig of wattle, in a Tasmanian blackwood coffin.<sup>6</sup>

Traditionally on the 11th of November, the eulogy for the Unknown Australian Soldier is read. Remembrance Day 2021 is the 28th anniversary since the first eulogy was delivered by Prime Minister Paul Keating.<sup>7</sup>

He asserted that ordinary men and women who died in serving Australia were not ordinary, they endured hardship, showed courage, were bold and resilient. I quote:

“...out of the war came a lesson which transcended the horror and tragedy and the inexcusable folly. It was a lesson about ordinary people - and the lesson was that they were not ordinary. On all sides they were the heroes of that war; not the generals and the politicians but the soldiers and sailors and nurses - those who taught us to

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<sup>3</sup> <https://anzacportal.dva.gov.au/commemoration/commemoration-day> page 4 accessed 31/10/2021

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.army.gov.au/our-heritage/traditions/remembrance-day> page 3 accessed 8 November 2021

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.awm.gov.au/commemoration/customs-and-ceremony> page 2 accessed 8 November 2021

<sup>6</sup> Ibid page 2

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.awm.gov.au/commemoration/remembrance-day> accessed 28 Oct 21

endure hardship, to show courage, to be bold as well as resilient, to believe in ourselves, to stick together. The Unknown Soldier ... was one of those who by his deeds proved that real nobility and grandeur belong not to empires and nations but to the people on whom they, in the last resort, always depend..."

Prime Minister Keating's focus was not on war over peace, but on the bravery and courage of our Australian men and women, who made the ultimate sacrifice in wars. He stated:

"The Unknown Australian is not interred here to glorify war over peace...the Unknown Soldier honours the memory of all those men and women who laid down their lives for Australia."

We also note that the difficulties and hardships of the war brought the community together as never before. Australians and Tasmanians have a strength of character that, in times of crises, transcends our differences. We continue to see that spirit demonstrated in our community reaction to the COVID pandemic, and the way that we have gathered in common cause in response.

Ordinary people have acted in extraordinary ways and will continue to act in extraordinary ways again.

On this Remembrance Day, we remember the bravery and courage of the fallen in all Australia's wars. We remember and honour the fallen in World War I, in World War II, and in Malaysia, Korea, Vietnam and Afghanistan.

We remember all who have served and continue to serve in the defence of our Nation.

I cite from the poem *In Flanders Fields*

We are the Dead! Short days ago

We lived, felt dawn, saw sunset glow,

Loved and were loved, and now we lie

In Flanders' fields.<sup>8</sup>

I thank you all for coming together to commemorate and honour our past on this important date.

Lest we forget.

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<sup>8</sup> <https://www.awm.gov.au/commemoration/customs-and-ceremony/poems> *In Flanders Fields* John McCrae accessed 10 November 2021