



OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
VICTORIA

**MELBOURNE LEGACY'S 87th ANNUAL ANZAC COMMEMORATION CEREMONY FOR
STUDENTS**

Friday, 20 April 2018

Ms Bronwyn Halfpenny MP, Representing the Premier and the Minister for Veterans' Affairs

Ms Judith Graley MP, Parliamentary Secretary for Education, Representing the Minister for Education

The Hon David Hodgett MP, Shadow Minister for Roads and Infrastructure and for Ports and Freight, Representing the Leader of the Opposition

Mr Tim Smith MP, Shadow Minister for Education

Mr Hugh Robertson, President, Melbourne Legacy

Air-Vice Marshal Chris Spence AO (Retd), Chair of the Shrine Trustees

Senior officers and members of the Australian Defence Force,

Dr Robert Webster OAM, State President, RSL and **representatives of other Ex-Service Organisations,**

Members of the Consular Corps,

Distinguished guests

Ladies and gentlemen

Students

First, I acknowledge the traditional owners of the land upon which we are gathering and pay my respects to their elders past and present and to any elders here with us this morning.

Next Wednesday, we commemorate the courage of the thousands of young Australian and New Zealand soldiers – the ANZACs – who fought far away at Gallipoli, 103 years ago, in the First World War.

It is the anniversary of the day they landed on the Gallipoli Peninsula in Turkey, in an attempt to scale the steep slopes above the beach, to make inroads towards the Turkish capital.

No one knows in exact figures, but it is estimated that on that one day alone – the 25th of April 1915 – approximately 650 Australians died and more than 1,300 were injured.

And so, the 25th of April is the day when we come together as a nation, to pause and to reflect on those soldiers who fought in that war and in the course of wars, conflicts and peacekeeping duties since then.

The passage of time, and the loss of living links to the First World War can make it difficult to grasp the significance and sacrifice of the ANZACs.

It must sound so long ago to you. Indeed, it sounds long ago to me as well. It WAS a long time ago.

So why does it matter so very much?

First, there was that enormous loss of life.

The young Australian boys and men who left to fight in an overseas war, were not much older than some of you here today.

Around half of all those who served were either wounded, taken prisoner, or lost their lives.

Imagine that. It was a loss that left no one untouched. Every Australian household, every school and every workplace was impacted.

The tragedy was not just the loss of those young lives, but the loss of their futures too. All the things these young men wanted to achieve, all they would become and all that they could offer to their communities was taken from them.

The memory of those who died – who made the ultimate sacrifice – has been carried through the generations, and through the century, and so it must continue.

ANZAC Day matters because we have all been touched by conflict in some way. Every single one of us.

For some, it is because a great-grandparent or other relative has served, or because a parent or someone close is serving in the Australian Defence Force today.

For others, it is because they have experienced war first-hand, and have come to Australia with their families, seeking safety.

For all of us, it is because the freedoms and peace we enjoy in this country have been protected by the men and women who have served on behalf of us all.

And so, we must remember them with gratitude.

But ANZAC Day also matters for the most contemporary of reasons.

It reminds us that we currently have troops on active service overseas. It reminds us that, on a daily basis, they sacrifice time with their loved ones and families, and selflessly put themselves at risk to make the world a safer and more peaceful place.

And it reminds us too that although their uniforms and equipment today might be different from their brothers' more than 100 years ago, and the battles, terrain, tactics and technology also differ from days gone by, at the core, those serving on 25 April 2018 are so very similar to those serving on 25 April 1915.

Just regular Australian men and women who have stood up bravely to represent us all.

ANZAC Day gives us a good opportunity to gather together to say 'thank you'.

I want to thank Legacy too for its tireless work – over the better part of the past century – caring for veterans’ families. And a particular thanks for arranging this important Ceremony today for so many young students.

It makes me optimistic when I see so many of you here, that you – our future leaders – will truly understand why we must never forget.