

## **RSL WA**

### **ANZAC Day Commemorative Service at Perth Concert Hall**

#### **Address by the Honourable Kim Beazley AC Governor of Western Australia**

**Thursday, 25<sup>th</sup> April 2019**

I would firstly like to acknowledge the traditional owners of the land on which we meet – the Wadjuk Noongar people – and pay my respects to their elders past, present and emerging.

We have been and are one of a small number of nations determined to defend ourselves. Most rely on the kindness of neighbours and strangers. Their armed forces for internal security and ceremonial.

We have sought allies firstly with our British founders. Then in World War II, and afterwards the United States. We have never presumed on them. We have never thought they were or should be more mindful of our defence than ourselves. And we should not forget our allies and ANZAC's, the New Zealanders. World War I deepened our sense that they were our kith and kin.

We have also never thought our defence an easy task. We have always accepted the possibility of an existential threat. We have always assumed its emergence would place the bulk of the response on our shoulders. And the bulk of that on the shoulders of the men and women whose faithfulness, courage and sacrifice we commemorate today.

This commemoration serves a dual purpose. One is an expression of gratitude. The other is a signal. It is well beyond these shores a statement to all that we will defend ourselves. Within our shores it is a statement to our people that collectively we will value sacrifice, we will honour those who make it. We will take responsibility for those who may suffer as a result of it. We say, "When you take on this burden you do so because we all think it critical for our survival". Encouraging this view is an act of defence itself.

Nothing is more encouraging when attending a dawn service anywhere in this country, and among communities of Australians globally, than to see young Australians in numbers. They know what the generations have known, the terms and conditions of our survival.

The Australian War Memorial this year wants us to concentrate on the contemporary and immediate past contributions by our serving personnel to war, peace keeping and war-like operations and I will speak on that shortly.

I want to round out briefly the last five years of commemoration of the events from which this ANZAC commemoration emerged.

Last year we focussed this day on the battle at Villers-Bretonneux. It occurred this day the last of half a dozen defensive battles as we helped blunt the final German assault. That victory foreshadowed the decisive engagement of Australian soldiers in the battles which broke the Hindenburg Line, leading to the Armistice and the surrender of Germany and her allies. In global

strategic terms we have never had the influence as a nation as we had then with our outsize impact on those battles.

We were perceived as a nation of character. That character was heavily male – the ANZAC – a man of inventiveness, courage, committed to friends, stoic, aggressive in battle, bronzed, loyal, a good friend. Masculine; but it was women who carried society in the post war years.

Next year we will commemorate the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the end of World War II. That war saw the legend envelope us all – men, women, indigenous, immigrant. We were the most mobilised nation of all the belligerents. Single women were civilly conscripted. Married women played their part. As well as serving in the forces themselves, indigenous labour was critical to our northern defence. We had always owned ANZAC Day collectively, now the reality reflected the perception. That has been sustained through subsequent wars leading to the contemporary era.

As we arrive at the contemporary era we recognise that the chain of commitment since World War II runs through Korea, Malaya and Vietnam. Indeed, speaking of anniversaries it is the 50<sup>th</sup> of the Battle of Binh Ba, a noted event in the history of our engagement with Vietnam.

There is another big anniversary this year. It is the 20<sup>th</sup> of our commitment to leadership of INTERFET in Timor-Leste. That was for humanitarian and security purposes.

It is a sobering thing to be a West Australian in this contemporary era. As we speak, West Australians are providing a large percentage of those serving in Iraq, Afghanistan and further afield. At sea, patrols of naval ships in the northern Indian Ocean have for the best part of 30 years been drawn from HMAS Stirling.

As I said earlier, today is a signal to those of us prepared to make a career of the profession of arms. We make today a statement that you are valued and honoured. We know as we make it we are strengthening our community. There are 25, 000 veterans in WA. In practical terms their needs and challenges must be met by us all where we can, for that is our contribution. And we will shortly hear from Mr James McMahan who knows all about these challenges.

We are well aware of the critical role the RSL plays in working for the best approaches to meeting these challenges. I would strongly urge support for their appeal.

Still, my mind drifts back to origins. The most poignant story of the end of that war is a female image. The picture of 10, 000 widows and mothers dressed in black marching to the waterfront through Sydney's domain. They went down to the waterfront and cast flowers into the sea from where their menfolk had left, 60, 000 including their husbands and sons never to return.

My grandmother was a war widow so my image of a war widow is one of an old lady. These women were young, many never married again. They and women like them had to handle a society in which over the next decade another 60, 000 died of war causes. It was their women folk who sustained society.

No better example of the point made at the outset that just as we are a nation that defends itself we have always known that all play a part in it.