

**RSLWA**  
**ANZAC Day Commemoration**

**Recorded message by the Honourable Kim Beazley AC, Governor of Western Australia**

**Sunday 25 April 2021**

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

Today we take up a sacred promise our society made to our first ANZACS and the many since that we, through our generations, would never forget their sacrifice of life, limb, and peace of mind and heart. Nor would we neglect the families who lost so grievously. Nor would we ignore our obligations to the needs of those who have returned or have served.

These are moral obligations. They are also practical. We have learned in our short history that we must sustain those military capabilities in a world of constantly changing geopolitics and the technologies and exigencies of war. Those who are prepared to serve in lethal circumstances need that absolute confidence. As well as an act of prideful recognition of great courage and sacrifice, we are performing an act of defence of Australia. We are fortunate we have the RSL to hone our responses and obligations.

Today the RSL has asked us to have special regard for our air forces in this the RAAF's centenary year, and I will say a little more about that later. First however, I want to say something about those who have served from all services in our Afghanistan commitment which is drawing to an end. Particularly our ground forces both special and conventional who have borne the brunt of the direct struggle.

Firstly. This was a commitment made under and continued under our ANZUS obligations. The benefits of the relationship are massive and permit us to sustain our defence, probably unaffordable without it. Our ally deeply valued our commitment.

Secondly. Under extraordinarily difficult conditions we gave the people of Afghanistan a chance to choose a way forward inclusive of all members of society with the possibility of a well-educated, healthful, substantial future. Pursuing that was always and rightly a task for the Afghan people and is now wholly so.

Thirdly, and not yet well understood, is the intensity of our service personnel's battle experience. Arguably at the section, platoon and company level the most extensive we have conducted. The two world wars were the battles of generals, subsequent conflicts of brigades and battalions. This was a war of captains and NCOs and involved thousands of engagements. Not month by month but day by day and night by night. The courage they displayed is unsurpassed. Flaws, as are always the case, will be dealt with, but the commitment and frequent courageous and successful actions are added now to the history of our engagements which make up the ANZAC tradition. Over the past 20 odd years, around 7-10,000 West Australians have been committed to this and other tasks.

These include members of the RAAF, whose centenary we celebrate this year. The RAAF was a product of the experience of army aviators in the First World War. In the Second World War they were on the front line here in the Pacific, in the Middle East and in Europe. Of the 11,000 airmen who have lost their lives in combat since 1921, over 9,000 did so in that war. In the various air commands in Britain we were deeply engaged in combat vital to victory. Here they were crucial in the defeat of the attack on our approaches.

Of all the services it is the air force which defined the struggle as the Battle for Australia. That is because the brilliant and effective air defence sortied mostly from a major collection of air fields across our north. All three of our services were main force units in the South West Pacific command.

It was not until 1944 that General Douglas MacArthur had more American personnel under his command than Australian. Our mobilised home base with the civil conscription of single women and the extensive commitment of married women was the most mobilised society. We were the only American ally in the US lend-lease programme where they ended up the debtor in the relationship.

Now the RAAF is there again. It's modern fifth generation aircraft and systems vital for our defence.

In all services that debt we owe the prepared is continued. The task of the RSL and the challenge to all of us does not abate.

*At the going down of the sun, and in the morning, we will remember them.*

**ENDS**