

RSL WA

Dawn Service

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

Monday 25 April 2022

Speech length (6 mins)

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

We gather here this morning knowing that, while we are still living in challenging times due to the COVID pandemic, we are free from war and conflict.

There were times when this was not the case. When fighting for freedom meant looking after one another, and pausing to remember those Australians who backed up their mates in the most dire of circumstances.

As we gather here this morning at sunrise, elsewhere around the world, ANZAC Day services are also being held in places where Australian lives were lost on foreign soil.

At dawn on the 25th of April 1915, Allied troops landed on the Gallipoli peninsula in Ottoman Turkey. The Gallipoli campaign ended in a tragic and costly defeat that saw 8,700 Australian killed and more than 19,000 wounded. It is also saw the start of something unique, the fostering a sense of national identity.

Through the many years since that ANZAC dawn, sprigs of rosemary – that still grow wild on the Gallipoli Peninsula – are worn as an enduring symbol of fidelity and remembrance.

Special ANZAC Day services are also being held where Australians fell overseas, including at Villers-Bretonneux in France; Hellfire Pass in Thailand, Sandakan in Malaysia and Port Moresby in Papua New Guinea.

Elsewhere - away and at home - thousands also gather to remember those who deployed and those who died or were wounded in other conflicts including Korea, the Malayan Emergency, Vietnam, the Gulf War, Iraq, Afghanistan and East Timor.

We recognise the more than 1.5 million service men and women who have served our country and the 102,760 Australians who have died during or as a result of war service, other conflicts and peacekeeping operations.

All of these observances have special significance, as do the many services being conducted today to pay respect to all those who fought and who died in conflicts over the 100-plus years that have gone before us.

Here underneath the State War Memorial are concrete foundations that are supplemented by heavy brick walls which enclose an inner crypt. On it are written the names of more than 7,000 Western Australians who were killed in action, or who died of wounds or illness.

It is in this place, and many other places throughout W-A, that we gather, year after year, to recall the harsh reality that peace is maintained through strength.

Weakness can invite aggression. And the appearance of it hinders our diplomatic efforts to create a global and regional environment that sustains freedom.

The horrendous human consequence of the Russian attack on Ukraine is before us in all media. It is a slaughter of the innocents.

We are reminded that war affects children in all the ways it affects adults, but also in different ways. Children are dependent on the care and protection of adults who love them, and they struggle to comprehend why bad things happen to good people.

Unfortunately history shows that, despite the many lessons made to try to avoid conflict, it continues to visit those who just want to live in peace.

At the end of World War One, a prophetic observation was made by one of Australia's most respected wartime military leaders, Sir John Monash. It still has resonance today.

Deploring the waste of human life, he wrote in his memoirs his earnest prayer that a nation needed to preserve peace by being ready, and able, to defend its liberty.

His assessment was tested twenty-five years later. Then Australians in Papua New Guinea fought and died fighting for freedom on Australia's doorstep. They were bravely supported by the local people. Here this morning, for the first time, representatives of the P-N-G Association of Western Australia joined us in the laying of wreaths.

This is the 80th anniversary of our year of living dangerously. We shared that with the people of Papua New Guinea and others in the South Pacific. Our nation fought for its very survival in the fierce battles of the Coral Sea, the Kokoda Track, and the bombing of Broome and other cities. We faced the very real threat of invasion. This was at a time when the defence of Australia by America, whilst assured, was not yet here in strength. At its beginning, Australian soldiers carried the battle. As the year proceeded, our allies gradually joined in facing battle, not only in P-N-G, but also in the Solomon Islands.

In that year, we mutually ground our opponents down, as Japanese H.Q. in Rabaul effectively confronted a two-front war.

In the south-west Pacific region, we supplied a huge percentage of war materials – then, and throughout. As we debate Defence spending around 2% of G-D-P we need to understand what war really costs. We were at 1.5% in 1938-39, 14.7 in 1939-40, 23.4% in 1941-42 to a peak of 34% in 1942-43.

Then, after World War Two came Korea, the Malayan Emergency, the Borneo Confrontation, the Vietnam War, Gulf War, Afghanistan and Iraq Wars and ongoing current operations in the Middle East.

Whatever is the cause and intent of war or conflict, the importance of ANZAC Day is to respect and honour those who were called to defend freedom over tyranny.

Today we not only salute the service and sacrifice of the all men and women who have worn our country's uniform, but also to acknowledge the impact on family and friends who remained at home.

And when many of them did come home, even so recently, they brought with them the unseen wounds of psychological and neurological reactions to the trauma of war. Reactions to an innate sense of their own mortality, the dread of battle, of being wounded. Of what they had seen, heard or smelt.

The legacy of war's assault upon the senses is reason enough to do all we can to support all our Veterans and their families. It is indeed our duty and a duty that is taken up willingly and with compassion. The RSL keeps all this before us.

In fact, as we gather today, we are fulfilling a sacred duty that the people of our nation undertook in the aftermath of World War One.

ANZAC Day is, in many ways, the focal point of a national oath.

We told the soldiers who went away to fight for us that they would never be forgotten. That their families would be supported and honoured forever, and particularly that would be the case if they were killed or injured in the service they were performing.

It is a sacred duty, therefore, that we are doing what we are doing now.

We are keeping a promise that was, in effect, a national oath.

We honour this oath both out of gratitude, but also because we will always confront the possibility of war. We will always be having to defend ourselves.

Those of us who would protect the rest of us need a reminder of our care and gratitude.

We always said, after every global war, that it was the war to end all wars. This can never be the case, as war is endemic to the human condition, though diplomacy to prevent it can never be neglected.

Nations like ours have to be defended. And if we are to successfully defend ourselves, we need to give the assurances of continued honour and support to those who choose to take up arms on our behalf.

When we leave here today let us continue to keep in our thoughts those names that remain in silence within this Memorial. Later today, our oldest and newest Veterans will gather as one for the ANZAC Day march through the streets of Perth for the first time in more than two years.

It will be a time of reflection but also a time of happiness in reuniting with mates and marching for those who have gone before.

We will then gather again inside the Perth Concert Hall for the traditional ANZAC Day commemorative service, after which I am sure many of our veterans will gather for private reflection and camaraderie.

As the RSL says to those of you here, and to the thousands of Western Australians at other Dawn Services, or at home, let us all know that the price of peace is eternal vigilance.

Lest We Forget.