

**ANZAC DAY SPEECH
LAUNCESTON 25 APRIL 2012**

**By
DOUG HUMPHREYS
PRINCIPAL MEMBER VETERAN'S REVIEW BOARD**

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to join you here in Launceston for your Anzac Day ceremony. It is a great privilege and honour to be with you today in my capacity as Principal Member of the Veteran's Review Board and as a serving member of the Army Reserve.

Tasmania has a proud tradition of distinguished service in the Australian Defence Force which continues to today. Australia's most decorated soldier, and acknowledged by many as the most decorated soldier of the British and Commonwealth forces in World War 1, was a Tasmanian - LTCOL Harry Murray VC, CMG, DSO and Bar, DCM. The tradition of service and gallantry by Tasmanian's has been repeated through the years. The gallantry shown by Ordinary Seaman Edward 'Teddy' Sheehan during the sinking of HMAS Armidale by Japanese war planes on 1 December 1942 is an example to us all. He was only 18 years of age when, although wounded by 2 bullets, he made his way to an anti-aircraft gun and engaged the war planes strafing his sinking ship, protecting his shipmates and saving their lives. Sheehan went down with the ship, still firing as it slipped below the water.

And of course it was on this day, some 97 years ago that a group of volunteer Australian and New Zealand soldiers waded shore in the pre-dawn light on at a place that would become immortalised as ANZAC Cove. Some were as young as 16, they had lied about their age, but all were keen to prove their courage and national identity. In the following 8 months, some 36,000 Australian and New Zealand soldiers were killed or wounded at Gallipoli. It was a huge price for what was then a young and sparsely populated country. That cost was in fact only a small proportion of the vast cost in lives and the blood that would be shed before the guns fell silent in the war to end all wars.

61,720 would die and another 155,000 would be wounded. A generation of the finest Australia had to offer was decimated. Last week I travelled from Hobart to Launceston. I had lunch at Ross. It is a pretty place full of history and has a beautiful war memorial. I looked at the number of names on the memorial and was surprised at first by the number of names of those who served. I was also saddened by the number that did not come home. There must have been few men in the District who did not volunteer to serve. Of those who came home many, in fact probably most, were incapacitated by wounds both physical and mental that would have cut their lives drastically short from what they should have been. Families were left devastated by the loss of sons, fathers, brothers, husbands. Those who returned were forever changed men as compared to what they had been before.

When I think of those young men as they were then, I believe they would be amazed, astonished and humbled to think their efforts at Gallipoli and what followed, all those years ago, would result in ceremonies being held this day across Australia. But not just in Australia for services are also taking place in France, Turkey, Afghanistan, Timor, the Solomon's and countless other places where Australians gather and

Australian Defence Force personnel. We honour not only the original ANZAC's but all those who fought on the land, on the seas and in the sky in the Second World War, and the conflicts that followed: Korea, Malaya, Borneo, Vietnam, the Gulf, Iraq and other places where Australians have served and are serving. Today in particular we remember those who have made the ultimate sacrifice and those who have been wounded in the past 12 months and their families.

The ANZAC's would I think be dumbfounded at the numbers of young people and the not so young who now travel to Gallipoli in peace and are welcomed by the Turkish people to participate in services at what was for them a terrible place of blood and death. They would be heartened at the enormous generosity of spirit and reconciliation by the Turkish commander at Gallipoli and later Turkish leader, Attaturk when he said of those who never left the Gallipoli shores that;

"Those heroes that shed their blood and lost their lives... you are now lying in the soil of a friendly country. Therefore rest in peace. There is no difference between the Johnnies and the Mehmets to us where they lie side by side here in this country of ours... You the mothers who sent their sons from far away countries wipe away your tears. Your sons are now lying in our bosom and are in peace. After having lost their lives on this land they have become our sons as well."

The ANZAC's would be comforted that in remembering them, we do not glorify war. None who have served find any glory in war. Rather we remember the individual sacrifice, the mateship, the resilience, the egalitarian nature and tolerance they exhibited. They judged their comrades not by where they came from, the colour of their skin, their religion, or what school they went to. They judged each other by their actions and capacity to get the job done. The Australian soldier was known for a degree of irreverence, and to some who did not know better, ill discipline. But they were well led in battle by natural leaders recognised for their ability and skill and promoted accordingly. The Australians were said to be the finest assault troops of the allied forces. Their casualty rate is mute testament to this, the highest of the allied forces.

The spirit of ANZAC is still relevant to us today. We value freedom, tolerance and a fair go for all. Australian's come together at times of adversity with a generosity of time, spirit and resources that is rare and to be treasured. The resilience, courage compassion, humanity and humour in times of adversity the ANZAC's showed still resonate today and is an example to us all. Indeed their qualities are what we as Australian's aspire to. They are part of us and we are part of them, even 97 years on.

Lest we forget.