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## Speech

ADDRESS BY

HIS EXCELLENCY MAJOR GENERAL MICHAEL JEFFERY AC CVO MC  
**GOVERNOR-GENERAL OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA**  
ON THE OCCASION OF

**REMEMBRANCE DAY COMMEMORATION, WOLLONGONG**  
WOLLONGONG, NEW SOUTH WALES

11 NOVEMBER 2005

- Mr Peter Poulton President, City of Wollongong RSL Sub-branch
- Councillor Alex Darling, Lord Mayor of the City of Wollongong
- The Honourable David Campbell, Minister for Regional Development
- Ms Noreen Hay, State Member for Wollongong
- Ms Sharon Bird, Federal Member for Cunningham
- Major General Horrie Howard
- Distinguished guests
- Ladies and gentleman

It is a pleasure to be here to join you for this Remembrance Day Service and I congratulate the Wollongong RSL sub-branch and all involved for its organisation.

Today we commemorate the 87th anniversary of the signing of the Armistice in 1918 which brought temporary peace to the world after four years of savage conflict.

World War I began with great fanfare, with long columns of smiling soldiers going off to the front wearing dress uniforms with flowers protruding from the muzzles of their rifles. Many expected it to be over quickly with heroes returning home, laden down with shiny new medals pinned to their chests.

Unfortunately, things did not turn out that way. The war lasted four years and millions of combatants and non-combatants died. Men lived in rat-infested subterranean holes along hundreds of miles of muddy trenches and fought vicious hand to hand battles that contained little glory but inflicted unbelievable death, pain and destruction.

World War I marked the beginning of an era where technology made killing people easy. Hundreds of thousands of men were killed by machine guns, barbed wire, new artillery and more sophisticated rifles. One of the most disturbing weapons was poison gas.

Transport on both sides was so quick, thanks to a splendid railway system, that neither side could gain a strategic breakthrough advantage at a decisive point and the war thus settled into a stalemate of trench battles, where tactical victories were measured in advances of perhaps two or three hundred yards with huge loss of life.

A total of 65,264,810 men were mobilised by all nations involved in World War I. Of them, 7,449,087 were killed, 21,215,226 were wounded, 7,750,945 were listed as prisoners or missing and some 36,415,258 were non battle casualties. Of the total force mobilised by all nations the average casualty rate was 56 per cent.

The Australian Imperial Force, (the AIF), was raised for service overseas in the war against Germany. The 1st Infantry Division and the 1st Light Horse Brigade were to be enlisted, readied and dispatched overseas in approximately six weeks from the time war was declared. Raised by voluntary enlistment, the AIF remained the only Army on either side throughout the war that did not conscript.

War is an awful experience. The official war correspondent C.E.W. Bean recorded a chilling eyewitness account of the terrible reality of war when the Western Australian 10th Light Horse Unit' went into action at the Nek in Gallipoli. It is a profoundly moving testimony to the extraordinary courage of the men involved.

Four waves of Australian troops, with bayonets fixed, charged heavily defended Turkish trenches. As each wave was mowed down, another was sent in, in a vain but gallant attempt to capture the enemy positions.

This is what Bean says:

*"After the second line had started, the men of the 10th Light Horse, forming the two lines which were next to attack, filed into the trenches. In addition to the fire which had previously swept through the parapet, two Turkish 75mm field guns were now bursting their shrapnel low over no-man's land as fast as they could be loaded and fired.*

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"Many seem to have been silently determined that they would run forward as swiftly as possible, since that course was the simplest and most honourable, beside offering a far-off chance that if everyone did the same, some might at least reach and create some effect upon the enemy.

"Mate having said goodbye to mate, the third line took up its position on the fire step. As the men rose above the parapet, the sound of gun fire was tremendous. The 10th went forward to meet death instantly, the men running as straight as they could at the Turkish rifles.

"With that regiment went the flower of the youth of Western Australia, sons of the old pioneering families, youngsters - in some cases two and three from the same home. Men known and popular, the best loved leaders in sport and work in the west, they rushed straight to their death.

In the course of the war 416,809 men had enlisted for service overseas, of whom 331,000 actually left Australia. At the war's end there were 95,951 men in France, 17,255 serving in the Middle East, and a further 58,365 in depots, bases and hospitals in Britain.

Total casualties were 60,000 dead, 166,811 battle casualties, 4,098 prisoners of war and missing, and 87,865 sick from other causes. We lost nearly 6,000 killed and wounded in one day at the battle of Fromelle. It was an enormous effort; proportionately we suffered the highest casualty rate of any army in the war, including 363 young men whose names grace the Wollongong War Memorial Arch behind me.

The impact on our small nation of the horrific losses of our best was profound, because we lost so much of the future talent of our country in the arts, the sciences, in sport, in agriculture, in industry, in politics and indeed as the future fathers of happy, well cared for families.

Yet from war's successful prosecution in a rightful cause does flow some good. Besides survival of our fundamental freedom, servicemen and women are bonded together in a sense of mateship, a sense of doing the right thing by the Battalion, Squadron or Ship's Company; of a unique camaraderie developed through the sharing of rations, water, work parties, sentry duty, and the mutual confidence arising from knowing that when bullets, grenades and shell fire are hurtling through the air, your mate, your Section, your Platoon, your Company, your Battalion, your Aircraft Crew or Ships Company will not let you down; and nor will you disappoint them. This is what we now term the ANZAC spirit.

That spirit highlights and encourages the concepts of duty, selflessness, loyalty up and down, courage (physical and moral), humour, sharing, and indeed a sense of spirituality; because in War, most men stand at some time, close to their maker. Indeed men who are mortally wounded invariably call to their mothers and their God.

A well known example of this spirit can be found in Simpson Kirkpatrick, a young man who spent some time living here in Wollongong. A stretcher bearer with the 3<sup>rd</sup> Field Ambulance, Australian Army Medical Corps, Private Simpson landed on Gallipoli with the covering force at dawn on 25 April 1915.

Using his initiative, Private Simpson quickly befriended a donkey to assist him in carrying leg wound casualties down to the dressing station. Working day and night he battled immense and sustained danger as he carried the wounded under fire from the head of Monash valley down Shrapnel gully to the beach. His inspirational and courageous efforts meant that Simpson and his donkey became a legend; a symbol of all that was selfless and heroic. Simpson is but one of the many thousands of courageous Australian soldiers whom we commemorate today.

Our children are now 87 years separated from the end of WWI, 50 years from WWII, and a generation or more away from the Vietnam conflict, and it is very difficult for them to comprehend what our service men and women went through.

The sadness and the memories of war and its meaning can only really live inside those who served and in the homes that sacrificed. But that is no excuse to forget. Every Australian should remember and thank those who left the security of Australia and gave up jobs, family, friends and other loved ones to live with mud, heat, rain and disease; to eat bad food; to carry great weights and to live with the daily risk of maiming or death from bullet, grenade, shell, mine, gas or bayonet.

They toughed it out when their mates and comrades were torn apart, and hung in there until it was over - over there - so it didn't end up over here.

This service today lets all those who have served, particularly those of WW 1, know how grateful as a nation we are for what they did. Because if they had lost, our country would have been very, very different from the one we know now; and most unpleasantly different I would suggest.

Ladies and gentlemen, the memories of our veterans, and those who made the greatest sacrifice should live on forever in our hearts and minds. Today marks the 87th anniversary of the armistice in 1918, which brought a temporary peace of 20 years to the world, after four crushing, agonising years of war. Our men and women fought and died for genuine freedom, and achieved it, and it is now our sacred duty to maintain it.

So how should we do this? I think there are five principles. First, as a society we should come together as one people and really live the ANZAC spirit as a national philosophy just as our veterans surely did.

Secondly, we need to put country ahead of self as those men and women did before us, as this serves to enoble the human condition;

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gun and rifle fire can be worthily extrapolated into the physical and moral courage that individuals need in today's peacetime society when standing up for fundamental principles and for what is right; and fifthly, their love of family, as revealed in their letters to wives, sons and mothers, reminds us yet again of the values they placed on a loving and cohesive family life.

If in today's changing, complex and at times difficult circumstances, we can live by the values they fought and died for, we will have nothing to fear.

A thoughtful and peaceful Remembrance Day to you all.

"Lest we forget".

Thank you.

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