



## **ANZAC Day Dawn Service Speech - Version 2**

It is heartening to see the increasing number of people, especially our younger generations, attending these dawn services and the ANZAC day march. I know the ever decreasing ranks of our veteran's value your attendance.

Today is a special day when we remember all those, whether service personnel or civilians, of every nation, who suffered or continue to suffer through war. In particular we remember those who served in the Australian defence forces on active service from the Boer War to Rwanda, including those currently serving with the UN missions. We remember those who paid the supreme sacrifice so that we, and the people of other nations, can live in peace. We remember those who continue to suffer through their physical or mental scars, including those next of kin whose grief and sense of loss can never be eased.

This is also a day of thanks and quiet reflection on what a wonderful, lucky nation we live in. It is a time to reflect on Australia's commitment to continue to contribute to peace in other parts of the world. We cannot isolate ourselves and ignore these responsibilities. In a perfect world there would be no wars, no aggression and no requirement to maintain defence forces. Unfortunately this is not a perfect world and there are more areas of conflict than ever before. Where necessary, to preserve the peace in our region or elsewhere in the world, we must be prepared to deploy our forces to fight for or protect the rights of our neighbours and our own nation. As we live in a democracy we must always remember that these decisions are made by the government, not by the defence force. In reality these decisions are made by the Australian people, by you and me. We elect the government to represent us and to make those decisions to defend us. This is an enormous responsibility and one which we must never forget. We, therefore, share the burden and we must never lay the blame on our defence forces for being deployed on operations. Historians will argue about the rights and wrongs of these political decisions, as they should. However, our forces have merely gone where the country has ordered them to go. They have distinguished themselves in every theatre by their professionalism and their compassion. No one can or should demand more than that.

Some say this day glorifies war, but every veteran will be the first to say that their greatest wish and most fervent prayer is that their children and this nation may never have to witness the horrors of war again. We must never forget that northern Australia has already been subjected to war, from Onslow to Broome, Derby, Wyndham, Kalumburu, Darwin, Maningrida, Katherine, Batchelor, Gove Peninsula, Horn Island, and Townsville, and that both service personnel and civilians have been killed in these actions on their home soil. Let us pray that this is never repeated.

As the ranks of our veterans continue to diminish, let us be determined to maintain this special day so that we can take a break from the roller coaster of life to reflect on how fortunate we are, to reflect on our freedom. To recognise the futility of war but to acknowledge that we must be prepared to defend this freedom and those of other nations as history is replete with peaceful nations being subjected to aggression. I would like to finish with an excerpt from a book by John Hepworth, titled 'the long green shore' - about our diggers in PNG - 'they pinned no medals on him, they made no speeches, we need no medals or speeches, we know him and remember. He was just a good, ordinary bloke - that's a point - that's an important thing - he was an ordinary bloke like you and me'. Let us remember all the young Australians who sacrificed the pleasure of growing old with their families, children and friends so that we could enjoy these freedoms and enjoy the pleasure of listening to the birds and the voices of those we love.

Should threats develop in the future, let us pray that the Australian people have the same courage and resolve as our forebears to keep this great, very special nation of ours free and that we remain committed to contributing to peace throughout the world