



ANZAC DAY Speech for use by the General Public Version 5

It is a great privilege for me to represent the Australian Army and to give this year's address. The theme for the address today is that we have an obligation to continue to 'fight on' in peace time, facing new challenges, in the same way our veterans faced adversity in many wars. Our servicemen and women fought in a belief that their various contributions would help to make a better world, and we should seek to honour their contributions by striving for our best in our daily lives.

I would like to recall the commitment and gallantry of an Australian soldier from World War 1 to amplify this theme. Although that campaign is now distant, we should never forget the courage and commitment of all Australians who have gone before us. The story of Alfred Shout is one I am sure will inspire you.

Alfred Shout volunteered for the 1st Australian Imperial Force in 1914, on the outbreak of war. He was posted to the 1st Battalion, and like many of those early volunteers – described as the cream of Australia's youth – he helped to create the ANZAC legend that did so much to bond the young nation of Australia. Lieutenant Shout's unit landed at Gallipoli on 25 April 1915, and he was awarded the Military Cross after courageous bayonet charges and deliberate exposure to enemy fire. He was badly wounded a few weeks later but discharged himself from a hospital ship early in order to get back to leading his platoon.

Some of the fiercest fighting in the Gallipoli campaign occurred in August 1915, with Australians seeking to take positions on the ridges at The Neck and at Lone Pine, as part of a desperate allied offensive. Promoted to captain while at Gallipoli, Shout won a Victoria Cross during the fighting at Lone Pine. His citation typifies this fighting: 'on the morning of August 9 1915, CAPT Shout and his men charged down the trenches strongly occupied by the enemy, and threw a number of bombs, killing eight and capturing the remainder. Later, from the position gained in the morning, he captured a further length of the trench under similar conditions and he continued to bomb the enemy at close range, until he was severely wounded, losing an eye and part of his arm. Despite these terrible injuries, he continued to proceed further, and had managed to light several more bombs when he was mortally wounded in the chest by enemy fire. He still continued to direct his men until he passed out, and he died the next day from his wounds'.

I discovered the story of Captain Shout amongst the writings, from 1916, of a Corporal MacQueen, who had also served on Gallipoli. He wrote of how all the survivors of the 1st Battalion had felt dearly the loss of a soldier, a leader and a gentleman. Corporal MacQueen recalled in his writings that on the night before the attack, Alfred Shout had cheered his men, saying 'we will make a name for Australia and ourselves tomorrow Mac'.

From that original 1st Battalion of 800 or so men, casualties by 1918 would total 700 – almost the whole unit. Australian casualties in World War 1 totalled 59,000 dead, and 152,000 wounded. From a population of 5 million, that represents 1% killed. In World War 2 we lost 32,000 dead and 100,000 wounded or made prisoner. In later conflicts in World War 2, Korea, Borneo and Vietnam there have been 2,000 killed overseas. And, unfortunately, we continue to suffer casualties in the various operations that our defence forces are involved in today.

Why then is the story of Captain Shout, and the casualty figures, relevant to us now? The theme I mentioned at the outset is worth recalling. We, the succeeding generations, have an eternal obligation to remember the efforts of women and men who have served Australia in war. We can honour their contributions by trying to live in the manner they would have expected from us. This is a challenge, as outlined in 1946 by a RAAF pilot, who had spent his school years in the Geelong area, by the name of John Gorton – later Australia's 24th Prime Minister.

When speaking at a service marking the first ANZAC day after World War Two, Mr Gorton noted that 'the returned servicemen would seek us to secure advances for our community and our country – to reduce poverty, increase education and improve our spiritual standard of living; and for Australians to take their place in the world, not as a self-sufficient sealed off unit, but as a respected member of the international family'. He added that 'the foundation stones have been laid in war, so in peace we continue to build'.

Mr Gorton's words are most relevant today, as we face many new challenges, such as preserving our environment, assisting our fellow aboriginal Australians, and helping other nations to live peacefully. These are the areas in peace we can build on. So how do we do this as individuals? Our efforts may not seem much, but it is valuable to reflect on the practical issues that confront us daily, where you and I could contribute to a better Australia.

For example:

- Do we respect and contribute in a meaningful way to our community and our nation?
- Do we play sport with a sporting attitude?
- Do we behave as leaders for our youth?
- Do we learn from history and have a quest for excellence?

These are some ways that we can 'fight on', to be worthy of the wartime efforts that we commemorate today.

I can imagine standing on the beach at ANZAC cove, and later, walking along The Nek and Lone Pine, seeing well-kept graves marking the spots where

Australians, such as Captain Shout, rest today, thousands of miles from home and their grieving families.

Australian war graves can be found all over the world, from many wars. Sadly, as the years roll on, the efforts of our forefathers are less well known. I ask you, on ANZAC day, to remember the many Australians, including the veterans here with us today, who have fought for Australia. We must treasure ANZAC day as a special day, when we recall with pride the efforts of Australians to stand up together for worthwhile principles.

I also ask you to take up the challenge of peace in your own life, remembering the challenges of war faced by our returned servicemen and women, and those defence force personnel who continue to serve overseas. The many problems that face our world today require our commitment and perhaps there is a special challenge for you that appear insurmountable. On ANZAC Day we should ask ourselves, How would the returned veteran, or Captain Shout, expect us to face these challenges? If we can draw from the contributions of those who have gone before us, I suggest that the right course of action will emerge for us, and our veterans efforts will have been remembered in a practical way that would please them.