

## **ANZAC DAY DAWN SERVICE IN THE KIMBERLEY 2015**

Time dims the memory of ordinary events, but not great events. In a nation's history, great events - whether in peace or war - live in our memories regardless of time. They are deemed great not necessarily for what they achieve, nor for whether they are reckoned to be victories or successes.

Rather, the great events are distinguished by the quality of the human endeavour they call upon, by the examples they create for ordinary men and women, and by the legends they inspire.

So it is with ANZAC day

The young men who first fought under the Anzac banner on 25 April 1915, 100 years ago to the day, had no grasp, nor warning, of the intense and deadly combat that awaited them on Gallipoli's shores, the fatigue, despair and hardship they would endure through the campaign, or the injuries and plagued memories they would carry home with them into their futures. Yet they banded together and they fought; they fought with a spontaneous, fearless, almost instinctive tenacity and grit, that would come to define the Anzac spirit. An expression that touches our hearts, inspires our passion, focuses our purpose, strengthens our resolve and, better than anything else, encapsulates the very essence of our national culture and makeup.

Whilst the Anzac spirit may have first risen in troops on the battlefield, it is indeed a life force that resides in all Australians.

Since that day 100 years ago, each generation of Australians has had cause to step up for service in conflict, peacekeeping, community rebuilding, and nation-making missions. The men and women of the Australian military have on every occasion served with distinction alongside our allies.

For my generation, military conflict rarely has a clearly defined front or enemy, nor is it contained within a single country or continent. The War on Terrorism is a war against our beliefs, waged by widespread agents of radical ideologies who seek to incite fear and uncertainty in our societies with the aim, ultimately, to suppress and destroy.

The Afghanistan campaign has lasted 11 years. It has been Australia's longest war. We have, with our allies, applied our significant skills and efforts to draining the perpetrators' manpower, resources and funding, forcing them to focus on their own survival rather than exporting their beliefs by force against us and nations like us. Our servicemen and women, like those who've come before them, have stepped up to this task, and did what was needed to be done. Of course, this is their job, but unlike most jobs, there is, day in, day out,

disproportionate risk and sacrifice, only matched by their preparedness to shoulder both.

These are essential stripes to the Anzac spirit. The Roll of Honour bears the names of the recently fallen, along with those of over 100,000 Australians who have died before them for this nation we share, love, and work to protect and nurture. We are forever in their debt. We will always remember them. In their passing, they acquire a timelessness, a constancy that guides and reassures us through changing times.

And then there are our wounded. Their sacrifice is different but no less. Their bodies and lives having altered immeasurably, they must nonetheless live on and rebuild themselves through changing times. There is no timelessness and constancy for the wounded; rather, a daily call on them and their families to face and overcome formidable challenges.

It is a profoundly sad reality that our wounded tend to be forgotten, though they have always vastly outnumbered our dead. There were over 155,000 wounded in the First World War alone. The war in Afghanistan may be coming to an end, but for those who were wounded there, it will never end. The physical scars inflicted will remain their curse and inspiration for life; the other, deeper, more complex, more insidious scars to hearts and minds will wreak havoc and pain over lifetimes. Everything we understand to be the Anzac spirit is what these people dig deep and long for every day. Courage, stoicism, humour, laughter, warmth, generosity and a determination never to give in or to be a burden on others.

The Anzac spirit, and the values it demonstrates, remain our common bedrock, creed, and source of hope and confidence through difficult and uncertain times, in our world and our communities. Times that would be wholly unrecognisable to our original Anzacs.

This is the core of its meaning to me. With dawn on the break, here in the heart of the Kimberley, as we commemorate one of our greatest defining events as a people and nation 100 years on, I ask each of you, all of us, to ponder and embrace your own special sense of the Anzac spirit.

We are Australians. We are born of the Anzacs. We are the custodians and stewards of their spirit, now and into our future. We must take good care of it and never, ever forget.