

Speech

Address By

Her Excellency the Honourable Quentin Bryce AC CVO
Governor-General of the Commonwealth of Australia

On the occasion of

Anzac Day Televised Address

ANZAC Memorial, Hyde Park, Sydney
25 April 2012

My friends, good morning from our ANZAC Memorial in Hyde Park, Sydney - a special place, like every war memorial to Australians across the world. It is almost unnaturally quiet, serene, even though it sits so close to the bustle and noise of our largest city.

As Governor-General, I have visited so many sacred places. Whether they are on a windy hilltop in France, in a dank, dark rail cutting in Thailand, or a simple stone obelisk in Afghanistan, our memorials to our fallen have that same, still, aura of reverence, love and dignity.

Each Anzac Day, we speak of the Anzac Spirit. In 1946, official historian, Charles Bean, described it this way:

“By dawn on December 20th ANZAC had faded into a dim blue line lost amid other hills on the horizon, as the ships took their human freight to Imbros, Lemnos and Egypt. But ANZAC stood, and still stands, for reckless valour in a good cause, for enterprise, resourcefulness, fidelity, comradeship, and endurance that will never own defeat”.

Bean’s description of the Anzac Spirit rings as true today, as it did in 1946.

Every one of the characteristics that define that spirit apply equally to our serving Defence Forces – in Afghanistan, East Timor, the Solomons, Egypt, the Sudan, the Middle East.

When I meet Defence people in distant posts, I ask them how they endure the hardships that come with the job, the long periods away from families. They respond with so many of Charles Bean’s words resourcefulness, fidelity, comradeship, and endurance – and they generally add “humour”.

The Anzac Spirit runs through today’s Australians. We see it, of course, in our forces. But we also see it, every day, in our rural, remote, urban communities.

It’s right there in an emergency – so many examples: among the burning treetops, the flaming grass during bushfires; in the mud, debris and swirl of floods; in the faces, the actions of our SES, our police, fire and ambulance officers; our neighbours

Australians are superb in a crisis – the weather and the harshness of our land demand it.

As we stand here, across our country and in many places around the world, Australians are coming together to mark Anzac Day, to honour the loss of precious life, to ponder the gift of service.

We remember the first Anzacs.

We honour them with reverence. We must also recognise and revere those in our midst today – April 25 2012 – who embody that historic Anzac Spirit in the work that they do for all of us.

The Spirit endures.

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Lest we forget.

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