

ADDRESS BY
HIS EXCELLENCY MAJOR GENERAL MICHAEL JEFFERY AC CVO MC
GOVERNOR-GENERAL OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA
ON THE OCCASION OF
ANZAC DAY MESSAGE
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ANZAC Day Message to the Nation
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On ANZAC Day, Australians across our nation unite to remember and honour those who have served with distinction in our defence force over many decades.

We honour them for their sense of duty to our country, their indomitable fighting spirit and for the appalling conditions many have so bravely endured.

We especially honour those who have given their lives in service to their country.

I am pleased to mark this occasion by speaking to you from the Australian War Memorial in Canberra - the custodian of our proud military history with its powerful spiritual dimension. Here, in the heart of the national capital lies the tomb of the unknown Australian soldier, flanked by the names of those 102,000 Australians who have died in war service.

This year marks the 90th anniversary of the end of the First World War - the War in which the ANZAC tradition was born: forged in the arduous campaign on the Gallipoli peninsula following the historic landing in 1915; and further honed in the crucible of the Western Front and in the deserts of Sinai and Palestine.

Last year, Marlena and I had the privilege of twice representing the Australian people at World War 1 ceremonies in Belgium. Firstly to commemorate the 90th Anniversary of the Third Battle of Ypres, also known as Passchendaele, and one of the bloodiest battles of that War.

And later in the year we participated in a moving ceremony to reinter the remains of five Australian soldiers, who had fought at Passchendaele,

We paid our respects at the Menin Gate - the route through which tens of thousands of allied soldiers, including the Australians, marched to the battlefields of the Ypres Salient between 1914 and 1918. Its archway is inscribed with the names of around 55,000 British and Commonwealth soldiers declared Missing in Flanders, including over 6,000 Australians who have no known grave.

As thousands of red petals were released from the Gate to then be gently blown through it by a single gust of wind, it was as though the spirits of the soldiers were with us to acknowledge our emotions of intense pride in their service and deep sadness at their loss.

This year also marks the 40th anniversary of the Tet offensive in Vietnam, and the significant battles of

Balmoral and Coral. It is also the 60th anniversary of the establishment of the magnificent infantry battalions of my own regiment - the Royal Australian Regiment - which we celebrated recently with the unveiling of a plaque at the beautiful memorial on the Strand in Townsville.

And finally, ninety years ago on April 25, 1918, the French village of Villers Bretonneux was liberated by soldiers of the 4th and 5th Australian Infantry Divisions at a cost of almost 2,500 casualties.

To this day the people of Villers-Bretonneux remain indebted to Australia for this sacrifice. Every classroom of the village school, which was built using donations from schoolchildren from Victoria, bears the inscription 'Let us never forget Australia'.

Today, as our service men and women continue to serve with dedication and distinction both at home and abroad, we remember and honour those who have gone before.

Lest we forget.