

**ANZAC DAY DAWN SERVICE**  
**SPEECH by His Honour Mr Tom Pauling QC**  
**Administrator of the Northern Territory**  
**Adelaide River – 25 April 2009**

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Today we stand in a special place. During the Second World War, Adelaide River was head quarters for the defence forces and this cemetery was created especially for the burial of servicemen who died in the Top End.

The Northern Territory Memorial commemorates those who lost their lives in operations in Timor, in Northern Australia and adjacent waters and who have no known grave. The civil section includes the final resting places of the nine Post Office staff killed during the bombing of Darwin.

As one of many war cemeteries managed by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission, Adelaide River reflects the scale, intensity and human sacrifice that is recognised and associated with war.

Today, we reflect on the First World War, the war that was meant to “end all wars”. Instead, it decimated families across five continents, left millions crippled and maimed, but gave birth to the wonderful spirit we celebrate today, the spirit of the Anzacs.

Imagine for a moment the bitter cold of April 1915. Fighting on the Western Front had reached stalemate; it was a case of one atrocious trench forward, one back. The Western Allies looked for another way to apply pressure to Germany. The appearance of their naval fleet off Constantinople should, they thought, lead to a Turkish collapse. The fleet was unsuccessful so the army was landed to conquer shore defences on the Gallipoli Peninsula.

One of the two main assaults was led by the First Australian Division and the New Zealand and Australian Division near the promontory of Gaba Tepe, half way up the peninsula. The translation of the Turkish name for the place, *Kabatepe*, ‘*rough hill*’ was the sorriest understatement.

This was literally hell on earth. As noted by war correspondent C.E.W.Bean in his book 'Anzacs to Amiens': *The Australians charged into fire so intense that they moved with heads down as if into fierce rain, some men holding their shovels before their faces like umbrellas in a thunderstorm.*

Further images of that dreadful place sound a chord with us: as the months passed Gallipoli became a desert of ankle-deep dust; a furnace all day, with misery compounded by an acute shortage of water and hordes of flies.

By the end of 1915, the army admitted defeat and withdrew, having suffered more than quarter of a million casualties. The commanders bungled the campaign with outstanding incompetence. The planning was hasty, the operation difficult in the extreme, numbers of wounded were chronically underestimated and the outcome disastrous. So why hark back to such a disaster today?

We remember, because despite everything the cruelties of nature and warfare could throw at them – this became the birthplace of the national ANZAC identity. Our forces displayed outstanding spirit, stoicism, gallantry and heroic qualities in humans that are regarded as an ideal. Indeed, one of the definitions for “a hero” is: *A person noted for feats of courage or nobility of purpose, especially one who has risked or sacrificed his or her life: soldiers and nurses who were heroes in an unpopular war.*

April 25<sup>th</sup> is now a national day of remembrance for all who have fought for our country and tended to our forces. Standing here in the Northern Territory we do not have a sea of red poppies swaying amongst the native grasses as a reminder of the battlefields of the First World War. But we do have within our tight knit Top End community a very real and living reminder of the fields of conflict. Many of the service men and women currently posted here have been involved in modern-day arenas from the Solomons to Sudan, from Afghanistan to Timor-Leste. I would like to note their history in the Northern Territory:

The Royal Australian Navy - whose first involvement took place in December 1918 when HMAS *UNA* was diverted to Darwin. This steam yacht, previously known as *Komet*, had been the German Government yacht for the colonies until captured in New Guinea.

1st Brigade - was raised in Sydney in 1914, as part of the 1st Division and fought at Gallipoli and on the Western Front. Eighty-six years later the Brigade relocated to the Northern Territory as a complete formation.

Seventy years ago, in 1939, the first Royal Australian Air Force Squadron was permanently based in the Territory. 12 Squadron was equipped with Avro Ansons – bombers fondly referred to as *Faithful Annie*, Wirraway fighters (*wirraway* means “challenge” in Koori) and Supermarine Seagull amphibious aircraft known by the British as *the Walrus*. More recently, we have welcomed members of NORFORCE and the joint Australian Defence Force Headquarters known as Northern Command, NORCOM.

Whether you are or were involved with our armed forces as defence members or defence family, or are simply here today to pay your respects and remember, I would urge you to continue the admired tradition of the ANZAC.

They were still fighting in the gullies of Gallipoli when, in October 1915, the Mount Hawthorn Progress Association, a small group based north of Perth, decided to perpetuate the then very new name 'ANZAC' and to build a monument that would be useful, a home for a returned Gallipoli digger and his descendants for as long as needed. A flag-pole in the front garden carried the Australian flag bearing the motto 'ANZAC', to be hoisted on 25<sup>th</sup> April each year at 4.30am, the time of the first landing at Gallipoli. So it was that a simple cottage became this country's earliest World War 1 memorial and the first monument to the ANZAC.

Its traditional 'Sunset Service' is the last ANZAC Day observation in the nation, the last notes that will resound today in remembrance. I would like to conclude with words from *The Sonnet for ANZAC Day* by the poet Alf Wood:

*The trumpet has the power to move us still,  
and though the debris of a flood of years  
lies over hand and mind, an aching thrill  
comes rising perilously close to tears.  
Sound the Last Post to hold the memory bright,  
then sound the Rouse and keep the torch alight.*