

ADDRESS BY
HIS HONOUR MR TOM PAULING QC
ADMINISTRATOR OF THE NORTHERN TERRITORY
ON THE OCCASION OF
ANZAC DAY DAWN SERVICE
The Cenotaph, The Esplanade, Darwin
25 April 2008

Ladies and Gentlemen

In the bitterly cold months of early 1915, fighting on the Western Front had reached stalemate. It was a case of one atrocious trench forward, one back. The Western Allies therefore looked for another way to bring pressure to bear on Germany. The appearance of their naval fleet off Constantinople should, they considered, lead to a Turkish collapse thereby shaking Germany and Austria-Hungary. The fleet, however, was unable to succeed so then the army was sent in to seize the shore defences.

The date was 25 April 1915. The place was 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, about half way up the peninsula. The translation of the Turkish name for the place, *Kabatepe*, 'rough hill' was the sorriest understatement possible.

What faced the ANZAC was literally hell on earth. As noted by the official 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.*

We can stand here and well imagine the fiercest wet season deluge – but this was not of rain but of torrential, vicious, life ending shrapnel.

Further images of that dreadful place sound a chord with us: as the months passed, the Gallipoli peninsula 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 had to admit defeat and withdraw, 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 identity represented by the acronym ANZAC. We remember because 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” that I came across was: *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 25th is now a national day of remembrance for all who have fought for our country and tended to our forces. Ten years ago today, this new cenotaph in Darwin was the centrepiece of our Dawn Service for the first time.

The cenotaph, together with the Memorial Park edging the cliff, has become a significant landmark for Darwin and commemorates all the wars and campaigns in which Northern Territory servicemen and servicewomen have been involved.

The definition of cenotaph is “a monument erected in honour of a dead person whose remains lie elsewhere”; it comes from the Greek *kenos taphos*, meaning “empty tomb”. However, the sentiments expressed today are not empty ones. We may not have red poppies such as remind us of the fields of Flanders - 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 men and women currently posted here have been involved in modern-day arenas of service ranging from the Sudan to the Solomon Islands, from Iraq and Afghanistan to Timor-Leste. I would like to take this opportunity to honour them. Firstly:

The Royal Australian Navy's presence predates the army in Darwin and the first RAN involvement in public affairs in Darwin took place in December 1918 when *HMAS UNA* was diverted here. It was a steam yacht previously known as *Komet*. Built in 1911, the *Komet* became the German Government yacht for the colonies. She was captured in German New Guinea by the Royal Australian Navy. I am embarrassed to say that her mission in Darwin was to protect my predecessor, the first Administrator, Dr John Gilruth, who was extremely unpopular.

On a grassed square on the lawns outside Government House some nine hundred men congregated on 17 December 1918 to express dissatisfaction and sedition. The lightly armed gunboat *HMAS Una* arrived to protect the Administrator, anchoring on Christmas Eve beneath the Government House cliffs. On the same grassy site outside Government House, the first cenotaph was erected in April 1921 to honour those Territorians who had lost their lives in World War I. The cenotaph remained in this location until the 1970s.

Members of The 1st Brigade. This Brigade was raised in Sydney in 1914, as part of the 1st Division, and fought at Gallipoli and on the Western Front. Throughout World War II the Brigade formed part of the militia to defend the Australian mainland and from 1966-1971 the Brigade headquarters was redesignated the 1st Australian Task Force for service in South Vietnam. In 1992, the 2nd Cavalry Regiment was the first Brigade unit to move to Robertson Barracks and by the end of 2000 the Brigade was relocated to the Northern Territory as a complete formation.

The first RAAF Squadron permanently based in the Northern Territory was 12 Squadron. They came to Darwin from Laverton in Victoria in 1939 equipped with Avro Ansons – the reconnaissance bombers that were fondly referred to as *Faithful Annie*, Wirraway fighter aircraft, (*wirraway* is a Koori word for “challenge”) and a Supermarine Seagull amphibious aircraft (known as *the Walrus* by the British). The initial stage of development of the base at RAAF Darwin took place in 1940 as Darwin’s development as a major centre in northern Australia accelerated.

There was also a proliferation of airfields the length of the Stuart Highway such as Strauss, Sattler, Hughes, Pell and Livingstone. Fenton and Long were created later for the US heavy bomber groups when they came in.

Forty years later we welcomed the first members of NORFORCE. Raised in 1981 as the first of three Regional Force Surveillance Units in northern Australia, the unit traces its history back to the 2nd/1st North Australia Observer Unit, a bush commando unit conducting surveillance during World War 2. This unit was organised by a famous anthropologist, Major Bill Stanner, who I came to know well in 1970. NORFORCE maintains squadrons in the Pilbara, Alice Springs and Gove, conducts operations in an area covering more than 1.8 million square kilometres and continues to have a special relationship with our isolated indigenous communities.

In 1988, an operational level joint Australian Defence Force Headquarters was established under the name headquarters Northern Command. NORCOM runs the only operation that has the focus of securing Australian Waters covering Queensland and the Northern Territory above 19 degrees south, and the Kimberley and Pilbara Districts of Western Australia.

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

The ANZAC were still fighting in the gullies of Gallipoli when, in October 1915, a small group called the Mount Hawthorn Progress Association formed a committee to build 'ANZAC Cottage' five kilometres north of Perth. The Association wanted to perpetuate the then very new name 'ANZAC' and build a monument that would be useful, providing a home for a returned Gallipoli digger and his descendants for as long as they needed.

A flag-pole was built in the front garden upon which the Australian flag - bearing the motto 'ANZAC' - was to be hoisted each ANZAC Day 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 memory. 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.*