

# ANZAC DAY 2016 IN SINGAPORE

## ADDRESS BY THE AUSTRALIAN HIGH COMMISSIONER

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### *“WHAT WE CHOOSE TO REMEMBER”*

- WHAT AS SOCIETIES WE CHOOSE TO REMEMBER DEFINES US, GIVES OUR PRESENT MEANING, AND HELPS US TO IMAGINE OUR FUTURE.
- ANZAC DAY IS A DAY OF COLLECTIVE REMEMBERING ...
- PERHAPS THE MOST SIGNIFICANT DAY OF COLLECTIVE REMEMBERING IN OUR CALENDAR
- LIKE ALL WAYS OF FRAMING OUR PAST, AND LIKE ALL FORMS OF COLLECTIVE REMEMBERING, THIS REPRESENTS A CHOICE.
- THERE WOULD BE MANY OTHER, DIFFERENT WAYS IN WHICH WE COULD REMEMBER OUR WAR HISTORY, AND MANY OTHER DAYS ON WHICH WE COULD DO IT.

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- SO, WHY DO WE CHOOSE THE 25<sup>TH</sup> OF APRIL. AND WHAT DO WE CHOOSE TO REMEMBER ON THIS DAY? AND HOW DOES THIS ACT OF COLLECTIVE REMEMBERING DIFFER FROM THE OTHER WAYS IN WHICH WE COULD SEEK TO RECALL OUR COMMON PAST?
- FIRST, WE CHOOSE TO REMEMBER THE **BRAVERY AND SACRIFICE** OF THE AUSTRALIAN AND NEW ZEALAND TROOPS. WITHOUT DRIFTING INTO SENTIMENTALITY, WE CAN ACCURATELY RECOUNT THAT THE MEN AND WOMEN OF ANZAC GAVE MORE THAN IN OUR PRESENT REALITY WE CAN IMAGINE, AND WITH FAR LESS CONCERN FOR THEIR SELF PRESERVATION. FROM CONTEMPORARY ACCOUNTS, THEY ALSO SEEMED TO BE AMONG THE MOST RESPECTED SOLDIERS OF THE TIME – CERTAINLY IN PHYSIQUE, AND APPARENTLY IN SPIRIT TOO.

- SECOND, WE CHOOSE TO REMEMBER **THE TRAGIC BLUNDER THAT WAS THE GALLIPOLI CAMPAIGN**, WITH ALL ITS STRATEGIC AND TACTICAL ERRORS; MISTAKES THAT CAME AT A MIGHTY COST. IT IS PERHAPS IMPORTANT TO OUR NATIONAL ETHOS THAT WE REMEMBER FAILURES OF LEADERSHIP AT THE HIGHEST LEVELS, AMONG THE MOST SENIOR COMMANDERS, AND CONTRAST THAT WITH THE ADMIRABLE PERFORMANCE OF THE OTHER RANKS.
- WE REMEMBER **THE HELL THAT IS WAR**. THE APOCALYPTIC COST OF THE GALLIPOLI CAMPAIGN IS THE GRIMMEST OF STORIES, WITH 32,000 CASUALTIES AMONG AUSTRALIANS AND NEW ZEALANDERS ALONE.
  - AS WE RECALL THESE MASSIVE NUMBERS OF LIVES LOST AND SCARRED, SOMETIMES WE REFLECT ON HOW A PEOPLE FROM THE ANTIPODES CAME TO BEAR SUCH A HEAVY BURDEN IN A THEATRE SO FAR AWAY.
  - THESE REFLECTIONS HELP RE-EMPHASISE TO US THAT NEVER AGAIN SHOULD WE ENTER WAR WITHOUT THE MOST CAREFUL ASSESSMENT OF THE RATIONALE AND THE POTENTIAL COST.
- IN FOCUSING OUR WARTIME REMEMBRANCE ON GALLIPOLI, WE REMEMBER A **DEFEAT**. A MASSIVE ONE. EIGHT MONTHS AFTER THE LANDINGS OF 25 APRIL 1915, OUR FORCES WITHDREW FROM THE DARDANELLES, HANDING TURKEY THE GREATEST MOMENT IN ITS MODERN MILITARY HISTORY.
  - ARE WE UNIQUE IN ALL THE SOCIETIES ON EARTH TO CHOOSE A DEFEAT AS THE STORY WE TELL OUR CHILDREN ON OUR HEROES DAY? AND WHAT, IF ANYTHING, DOES THAT TELL US ABOUT OURSELVES?
- WE REMEMBER THE **ELEMENTS OF CAMARADERIE** THAT CHARACTERISED THE ANZACS' RELATIONSHIP WITH THE TURKS. FIERCE FIGHTING TOOK PLACE, BUT WAS INTERSPERSED WITH ACTS OF SHARED HUMAN UNDERSTANDING – FOR THE BURIAL OF THE DEAD, AND FOR THE CELEBRATION OF OUR DIFFERENT DAYS OF NATIONAL AND RELIGIOUS SIGNIFICANCE.

- THIS REMINDS US OF THE BOND THAT, PARADOXICALLY, THE ANZAC EXPERIENCE HAS FOSTERED BETWEEN US AND THE TURKS. IT ALSO HELPS US BEAR IN MIND THE TRANSITORY NATURE OF ENMITY, AND THE CORE HUMANITY THAT BINDS ALL OF US TOGETHER.
- WE REMEMBER HOW THE ANZAC EXPERIENCE GAVE NEW SUBSTANCE AND MEANING TO THE **GREAT MATESHIP BETWEEN AUSTRALIANS AND NEW ZEALANDERS**. FORGED IN BATTLE MORE THAN A CENTURY AGO, THE SIBLING BOND BETWEEN AUSSIES AND KIWIS REMAINS UNPARALLELED IN OUR NATIONS' FEELINGS.
- AND WE REMEMBER THE SIGNIFICANCE OF ANZAC IN DEVELOPING A **SENSE OF NATIONHOOD** IN AUSTRALIA AND NEW ZEALAND. A SENSE OF OURSELVES THAT WAS SEPARATE AND DISTINCT IN THE WORLD. IT WAS A MOMENT AT WHICH WE 'GREW UP' AND IDENTIFIED OURSELVES; WITH A NEW SELF-CONSCIOUSNESS, ARISING FROM A MOMENT OF NATIONAL CRISIS.

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- ... THESE ARE SOME OF THE THINGS WE REMEMBER ON ANZAC DAY. **BUT THIS ACT OF COLLECTIVE REMEMBERING IS NOT STATIC**. IT CHANGES AS WE CHANGE AS SOCIETIES, AND AS OUR CONTEXTS CHANGE.
- IT'S WORTH CONSIDERING THE THINGS THAT WE NEWLY OR INCREASINGLY REMEMBER ON ANZAC DAY...
  - OVER TIME, WE HAVE GOT BETTER AT REMEMBERING THE ROLE OF **WOMEN** AT ANZAC, WOMEN IN OUR ARMED FORCES, AND THE ENORMOUS ROLE PLAYED BY WOMEN IN WARTIME GENERALLY.
  - WE HAVE GOT BETTER AT REMEMBERING THE ROLE OF OUR **INDIGENOUS PEOPLES** IN WAR. THERE IS MORE FOR US AUSTRALIANS TO DO IN THIS RESPECT, AND PERHAPS OUR NEW

ZEALAND COUSINS WILL HELP POINT THE WAY WHEN THEIR VETERANS DO A HAKA AFTER THE SERVICE TODAY.

- IMPORTANTLY, WE INCREASINGLY REMEMBER THOSE WHO HAVE FALLEN FROM **ALL NATIONS IN ALL CONFLICTS**.
  - HERE IN SINGAPORE, WE REMEMBER IN PARTICULAR THOSE ALL THOSE WHO FELL HERE IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR, AND IN CAMPAIGNS IN MALAYA AND INDONESIA. THIS CEMETERY IS TESTIMONY TO 24,000 ALLIED LIVES CUT SHORT IN THOSE CAMPAIGNS.
  - WE REMEMBER THE MANY OTHERS, IN PARTICULAR THE **SINGAPOREANS**, WHO WERE KILLED DURING WORLD WAR TWO ON THIS ISLAND. AND WE WELCOME BRIGADIER GENERAL GAN FROM THE SINGAPORE ARMED FORCES AMONG US THIS MORNING AND UNDERLINE OUR CONTINUING AND INCREASING MILITARY PARTNERSHIPS WITH THE REPUBLIC OF SINGAPORE.
  
- IT IS APPROPRIATE THAT WE INCREASINGLY REFLECT ON THE **SECURITY OF OUR REGION**, SECURITY WHICH HAS BROUGHT US UNPARALLELED PROSPERITY IN RECENT DECADES; AND WHICH WE HAVE PERHAPS GROWN SO ACCUSTOMED TO THAT WE TAKE FOR GRANTED. WE MIGHT CHOOSE TO REFLECT MORE NOW ON THE LIMITS TO THAT SECURITY, AND THE WAYS IN WHICH IT IS CHALLENGED AS THE ASIAN SCENE BECOMES MORE COMPLEX AND UNCERTAIN.
  
- WHAT WE REMEMBER IS IMPORTANT, BUT SO TOO IS HOW WE REMEMBER. **THE RITUALS OF ANZAC DAY** HELP US REFLECT ON OUR SHARED HISTORY, AND LEARN FROM IT. THE CATAFALQUE PARTY, THE MINUTE'S SILENCE, THE LAST POST AND REVEILLE, THE ODE TO THE FALLEN. THESE RITUALS PROVIDE AN ATMOSPHERE FOR REFLECTION, A WAY OF REIMAGINING OUR PAST AND ITS CONNECTION TO OUR PRESENT.
  
- COLONEL DAVID HAY HAS TODAY INTRODUCED A NEW WAY OF REMEMBERING HERE IN SINGAPORE - A TRUE "**GUNFIRE BREAKFAST**",

COMPRISING BISCUITS, COFFEE AND RUM, TAKEN IN THE DARK PRIOR TO THE SERVICE – A POIGNANT REMINDER OF WHAT THE ORIGINAL ANZACS ATE AND DRANK, IN THE DARK, IN AN ATMOSPHERE OF ANTICIPATION AND ANXIETY, ON THIS MORNING 101 YEARS AGO.

- IMPORTANTLY, WE REMEMBER **WITH OUR CHILDREN** - TODAY WITH THE HELP OF THE AUSTRALIAN INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL AND THE AVONDALE GRAMMAR SCHOOL, AND WITH ALL OF THE CHILDREN WHO HAVE BEEN BROUGHT ALONG TO KRANJI. WE REMIND THEM OF OUR PAST, INDUCT THEM INTO THE ACT OF COLLECTIVE REMEMBERING, AND INVITE THEM TO PASS ON THE TRADITION TO ANOTHER GENERATION.
- WE REMEMBER WITH **SERVICEMEN AND WOMEN PAST AND PRESENT**. WE ARE FORTUNATE TO HAVE GATHERED WITH US TODAY MEN AND WOMEN CURRENTLY SERVING ON HMAS MELVILLE AND HMAS ALBANY. AND WE ARE HONOURED BY THE PRESENCE OF EX SERVICEMEN AND WOMEN - INCLUDING NEW ZEALAND VIETNAM AND MALAYA VETERANS, MEMBERS OF 1 ROYAL NEW ZEALAND INFANTRY REGIMENT, AND FROM THE NEW ZEALAND PROVOST UNIT. I RESPECTFULLY ACKNOWLEDGE ALL OF THE ADF AND NZDF PERSONNEL SERVING IN SINGAPORE OR ON ASSIGNMENT HERE. WE ALSO PAUSE TO REFLECT ON ALL THOSE SERVING FOR OUR NATIONS, IN PLACES AROUND THE GLOBE.

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- AS WE ENGAGE IN ANOTHER YEAR OF COLLECTIVE REMEMBERING, IT IS WORTH GIVING THOUGHT TO WHAT WE MIGHT BE **COLLECTIVELY FORGETTING**. WHAT IS IT THAT IN FUTURE DECADES WE WILL LOOK BACK ON AND ASK “WHY DID WE NOT REMEMBER THEM?”, OR “WHY DID WE NOT REMEMBER THAT?”. “IS THERE ANYONE THAT WE ARE LEAVING OUT?” IS A QUESTION THAT WE MUST CONTINUOUSLY ASK.

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- ONE OF THE GREAT FEATURES OF THE ANZAC TRADITION IS THAT IT HAS BEEN ABLE TO **ADAPT OVER THE DECADES**, TO EMBRACE NEW REALITIES OF AUSTRALIAN AND NEW ZEALAND CIRCUMSTANCE, AND TO BRING WIDER GROUPS OF AUSTRALIANS AND NEW ZEALANDERS INTO ITS EMBRACE.
  - THAT IS WHY MORE THAN TEN THOUSAND AUSTRALIANS AND NEW ZEALANDERS NOW GATHER AT GALLIPOLI EACH YEAR, AND WHY MORE THAN A THOUSAND OF US ARE AT THIS SERVICE IN SINGAPORE.
  
- THAT IS GOOD. BECAUSE ANZAC DAY SHOULD NOT BE A STATIC OR ONE DIMENSIONAL ACT OF REMEMBERING THE FALLEN. IT IS AN **ACTIVE AND CHANGING WAY IN WHICH WE CONFIGURE THE PAST**, UNDERSTAND THE PRESENT AND IMAGINE OUR FUTURE. AND HOW WE DO IT MATTERS TO OUR COLLECTIVE SENSE OF SELF, AND THE COLLECTIVE SENSE OF OUR FUTURES.
  - THIS SELF, THIS “WE”, IS NOT GIVEN, BUT IS MADE AND REMADE, IN PART THROUGH CEREMONIES LIKE THIS ONE.
  
- THAT IS WHY WE SAY, AND MUST CONTINUE TO SAY, EACH YEAR, SOLEMNLY, REFLECTIVELY, AND THOUGHTFULLY **“WE WILL REMEMBER THEM”** AND **“LEST WE FORGET”**.