

Topic: **ANZAC Day**
Date: 1 May 2026
Speaker: Kate Chaney
Location: John XXIII College

War is so far from our daily experience here in Perth that it is hard to fathom the unimaginable loss of war—the fear, the bravery, the chaos and the sadness.

But many of us have a family story that helps to make it more real.

In my own family, hardware store worker Alfred Bond left his young wife and baby daughter here in Perth to go to war in 1915. He didn't make it back.

I can't imagine his fear, his bravery, the horror.

But I have an inkling about the long term loss. His baby daughter, who was my grandmother, grew up without a father in a time when there wasn't much government support.

With so many eligible young men dead, that baby's Auntie never married and worked her whole life to support her widowed sister and niece. She was one of the many women who bore the brunt of war, in hidden ways.

That baby, my grandmother, grew up and had 7 children. She passed on to them a strong sense of duty to community and it shows in the jobs they chose.

I like to think that as well as sadness and loss, Alfred would feel pride if he could see his 87 direct descendants and their partners gathering for Christmas every year. And 33 of those descendants have been students here at JTC, 5 or 6 of whom are here today.

I named my son Alfred after him, so that we would keep remembering.

My other grandmother, Delphine Anderson, lives alone just down the road in Cottesloe. She's turning 100 next month.

Her dad fought in WW1, and was an ANZAC at that famous battle at Gallipoli. Luckily he came home, but he rarely spoke of the war.

By the time Delphine left school, there was another world war. She became a nurse, like so many women of her age.

Women not only served in the armed forces, but took on new responsibilities at home, doing what was considered men's work in the absence of their husbands, brothers and fathers.

Gran was too young to serve as a nurse in the war, but she knew plenty of older boys who went off to fight and many didn't come back. Amongst those who did, many came back broken.

For Gran, war is something very real. It has been part of her life. It changed her dad and took her friends and changed the attitude of her whole generation.

Remembering war is a tricky thing.

There is always a danger that we glorify it. We want to remember our grandfathers or those we knew for their bravery and tell proud stories about them. We don't want to think that they died in vain.

And many were brave. But most, if not all, were also terrified.

I think there are two reasons we commemorate ANZAC Day.

Firstly, to remind ourselves that this must never happen again; to recommit to peace.

Here in Curtin we have two military bases, Irwin Barracks at Karrakatta and Campbell Barracks at Swanbourne. For the men and women working there, war isn't something from the distant past, they think about its dangers every day.

Right now, there are wars and conflicts all over the world. They are both distance and close.

They are happening on the other side of the world, but we also carry them in our pockets, with information about their horrors and their complexities on our phones at all times.

Today, as we mark ANZAC Day, it is a time to remember the loss, the waste, the horrors of war, as a reminder that it is the very very last resort.

The second reason to commemorate ANZAC Day is to appreciate the freedoms we have and remind ourselves to keep making the world better.

When I try to imagine my great-grandfather facing the horrors of war, I think about how he would want me to live now.

If you were facing death to defend your country, how would you want your descendants to live 100 years into the future?

If it were me, I think I would want my descendants to appreciate all the good things they have. I would want them to make the most of the opportunities they are given and do what they can to make the world a better place.

We've heard today in the prayers about some of the ways we can honour the sacrifices of those who went before us.

Treating others as we would like to be treated ourselves. Having compassion for every single person. Being kind. Having courage. Finding peaceful ways to work things out.

This is how we can take the sadness of ANZAC Day and the sadness of war and turn it into something positive.

These don't have to be huge gestures. Everything you do changes the world a little bit for the people around you – for better or worse. That could be the person sitting next to you now. You have the power to change their world.

When I think about the sacrifice Alfred Bond made for me – not seeing his daughter grow up, not having other children, not growing old with his beloved wife – I think that I owe it to him to keep making the world better.

So I will leave you with that thought on this ANZAC Day – we can honour the sacrifice of those who gave so much, by appreciating and improving the world they left us.

Lest we forget.