

School Captains – ANZAC Day 2019

Bodie Maffescioni's speech –

Good morning ladies and gentlemen, boys and girls. It is so heart-warming to see so many of you gathered here today, united as a community, brought together today on the 25th of April to commemorate those who sacrificed their lives for ours. We all gather here today not to celebrate the events that occurred during the war but rather to remember those who have served our country during the conflict, and acknowledge the sacrifices that they made for the ones they loved and cared for. To all the men and women who have given their lives for our freedom, as well to all that have been physically or psychologically injured after the trauma experienced.

This is a day where we can pause momentarily to really reflect on those qualities that were wielded by so many of the past generations of Australians who displayed acts of bravery, courage, discipline, self-sacrifice, mateship and loyalty.

On this very day in 1915, a group of volunteers from Australia and New Zealand found themselves upon a small beach on the Gallipoli Peninsula in Turkey. Many of these volunteers were only teenagers with some as young as sixteen, who were all nervous however proud to prove their courage and national identity. For me, being so privileged to live in such a safe environment, to know that boys my age were hiding their true identity so that they were able to enrol shows just how valiant these heroic souls were. The Australian and New Zealand troops were accompanied by the British, Indian and French forces, but were met with fierce resistance from the Turkish defenders.

By the end of 1915, both sides were evacuated due to heavy casualties suffered. In total, 36,000 Australians and New Zealand troops were wounded or killed at Gallipoli including dozens of indigenous Australians.

Today is not only a day to commemorate the ANZACs who fought on the front lines, but we also remember those who were back at home in Australia, and their efforts to maintain life. Women working tirelessly to support their children. And whole communities banding together to support those fighting abroad.

But throughout the hardships, these heroes earned a courageous, loyal and brave reputation. The experience drew Australians closer together as a nation and established the national character.

Ella Hayes speech –

We meet today not to celebrate or glorify war, but rather to remember those brave souls who fought at Gallipoli in 1915.

By the end of the First World War, around 60,000 Australians fighting for their country had lost their life, marking a truly catastrophic loss compared to the then population of around 5 million.

The 25th of April is not merely a date, or some remote campaign, but rather a spirit. It is a time to reflect on the qualities of past generations of Australians who in hardship displayed courage, discipline, self-sacrifice, self-reliance, resourcefulness and friendship. Even as the numbers of ex-servicemen and women decline, the spirit of ANZAC Day, which was bequeathed to us from battlefields long ago, will live on because it is a reflection of the very heart of our nation.

The Australian characteristics confirmed at Gallipoli must never be forgotten, and we need to continue to show them throughout our everyday lives. The ANZACs showed us that Australians have a unique quality which allows us to hold our heads high in the international community.

Australia was and is a multicultural nation, many of the soldiers who fought in the war were not even born in Australia, new citizens who bravely fought for their new country, holding a sense of mateship, and fighting for common goals and values despite having different heritages. This act of bringing cultures together is still seen today, no matter the race or background, shared values brought us together in 1915, and it has continued throughout society ever since.

The pride and grief of Australia following Gallipoli formed a bond, so strong that it made a statement to the world that our young nation had come of age and that our armed forces and our people were truly one nation. By coming together on the 25th of April each year, this spirit of national unity is rekindled.

At this service today, remember the ANZACs. Remember their courage, their determination and their spirit. To the Australian community, remember those currently serving this great nation. To the families and friends of departed comrades, remember they gave their lives so that you could survive and thrive. To the veterans - hold your heads high ... you have served this country nobly.

So today, as we pause in a moment of silence, we reflect on the horrendous impact that warfare has caused, and renew our gratitude for servicemen and women. We will never forget or lose respect for the people who served us. We as Australians will continue to admire and thank those who have gone before. For their efforts have made this country into the place it is today.