Remembrance Day Speech

DANIEL DOWN

On 11 November 1918, The Armistice, the agreement that ended the fighting on the Western Front in World War 1 was signed by the allies and Germany. An end to 4 years of tragic warfare, which came into effect on the 11th hour. We gather today 108 years after this date to honour those who served, suffered or died in World War 1. The tradition of observing a minute's silence at the eleventh hour reminds us to pause, reflect, and honour those whose service came at such great cost.

Millions had lost their lives during the events of the war, among them 60,000 Australian service personnel, with more than 156,000 Australians wounded, gassed or taken prisoner, with many more carrying the physical and psychological scars of war. The dead left to rest eternally in overseas nations, while traumatised soldiers returned to a nation both celebrating the end of the war, though also in a state of trauma over a war unlike any seen in history. Though there is no place where Australia's war dead lie in greater numbers than in the soil of the Western Front in France and Belgium.

At the announcement of the end of the war joy was neither universal nor unqualified, too many had died, too many wounded, too many mentally troubled, too many communities shattered, and today we still proclaim that the events can only be described as a tragedy.

While the battles of the First World War were fought thousands of kilometres away, their effects were felt here in Willoughby. Families from this district farewelled sons, brothers, husbands, and friends who would never return. Their names are remembered here in this Garden of Remembrance, connecting our community directly to the events we commemorate today.

It is the duty of us who live on to remember the brave and courageous sacrifices of these men and women who served Australia and made extraordinary sacrifices on behalf of their nation and hence why we are here today, to both commemorate and carry the legacy of these sacrifices so that they are never forgotten. To help us understand that personal connection, Ben will now share the story of one young man from our local community.

BEN MONGER

Thank you. While the scale of war can sometimes be difficult to comprehend, the story of a single individual helps us understand its human cost. Today I would like to share the story of Sydney Edward Ingram, a young man from Willoughby whose service reflects the sacrifice remembered on Remembrance Day.

Sydney was born in Victoria in 1895 but moved to Lane Cove with his parents and his younger brother 3 years after he was born. Like many young men of his age, Sydney, known to family and friends as 'Syd', had plans for his future. He attended Willoughby Public School and wanted to be a timber worker. It is hard to imagine what Syd would think if he could see Chatswood today. The quiet district he knew has grown into one of Sydney's busiest centres.

Syd was only 19 years old when he joined the 53rd Australian Infantry Battalion on 9 June 1915. Six months later he left for training in Egypt, and 6 months after that he left for France.

Syd served his country bravely, and was decorated with the British War Medal, the Victory Medal, and the 1914 Star. On 19 July 1916, Sydney's mother received a letter to inform her that her son had died in the disastrous battle of Fromelles. The Battle of Fromelles resulted in 5,533 Australian casualties in less than 24 hours, making it the worst 24-hour period in Australian military history. Each and every one of those men had hopes, dreams, and aspirations, just like Sydney, and the massive loss of all these young Australian men is incomprehensible.

More than a century later, Syd's story reminds us that those who served were ordinary Australians. They attended local schools, worked ordinary jobs, and lived in communities just like our own. By remembering Syd today, we honour not only one soldier, but all those whose sacrifice allows us to enjoy the freedoms we often take for granted.

Sydney Edward Ingram's name will be projected onto the Hall of Memory at the Australian War Memorial in Canberra on 12 January 2027, as part of Australia's ongoing commemoration of those who lost their lives in service.

DANIEL DOWN

We acknowledge both those who were able to be returned to those who they loved, those who were identified and buried with a name, and very importantly those whose sacrifices could not be attributed to a name. These people could not be returned to those who they cared deeply about, and many remain unnamed. It is our role now to think about these unknown soldiers. The Commonwealth War Graves Commission cares for 189,002 unknown Commonwealth casualties, each of those individuals has a name, a family and a story. While time has hidden their identities, and we cannot attribute their courageous sacrifices to a name, their bravery must never be forgotten.

Let's also recognise where we are today, The garden of Remembrance. The council built the garden to commemorate the Australian men and women from the Willoughby district who died during the Boer War, the First World War and the Second World War. The garden provides a place to reflect at any time of the year on the sacrifices made by service men and women. The cross of remembrance seen in the middle was erected on the mound in 1964.

For us here today we cannot personally know the experiences of those who fought, but remembrance is not simply looking back, but recognising the cost of war, and the importance of peace, we inherit the responsibilities of preserving their stories, and carrying their legacy, this may include simply trying to cherish living in a nation these soldiers fought for. Through this day we can see why the world should prioritise world peace. Brutal wars continue all across the world, not to a global level of the world wars,

though any war is unacceptable, and as a united world, we must strive to overcome the cruelty of war.

As we leave here today, let us remember those who served, honour those who sacrificed, and continue striving for a world in which future generations may live in peace. Lest we forget.