

Remembrance Day

Remembrance Day is observed by the states of the Commonwealth as it indicates the end of the First World War. We remember the members of their armed forces who have died in the line of duty. It is held on the 11th November at 11am every year. It is always held at 11am because that is the time the war ended. At this time, we show our respect to the people who died by observing a one-minute silence.

World War I started when a man named Archduke Ferdinand and his wife were assassinated by Princip, a member of a Serbian nationalist terrorist group, fighting against Austria-Hungary's rule over Bosnia on June 28th 1914. The killings sparked a chain of events that led to the outbreak of WWI by early August. During the conflict, Germany, Austria-Hungary, Bulgaria and the Ottoman Empire (The Central Powers) fought against Great Britain, Australia, France, Russia, Italy, Romania, Japan and the United States (The Allied Powers).

After four years of battle, the leaders of the German army told the German government to end the fighting. The government asked the US for an Armistice – an agreement to stop the fighting – and Germany's leader, Kaiser Wilhelm, left his job on the 9th November, 1918. Two days later, Germany signed the armistice and the guns fell silent. There was an extremely famous and remarkable speech by a man named Sir Edward Grey. This speech was one of the announcements that the tragic first world war had ended.

Many Australians died in the war (this is one of the reasons we have Remembrance Day). In fact, according to the First World War page on the Australian War Memorial website, 416,809 men enlisted, of which over 60,000 were killed, 156,000 wounded, gassed or taken prisoner.

Remembrance Day is incredibly significant. The importance, the reasons behind its warrants for celebration, and why so many other countries celebrate it, is more than justified by any death, let alone 60,000 deaths. Remembrance Day isn't just a celebration, it is also a time of personal reflection, and one that brings much sorrow and despair to many, and allows for personal reflection. The huge sacrifice made by those killed, allows Australians to live their lives free from unrest or war today.

By James O'Reilley