



**AUSTRALIAN HIGH COMMISSION
SOUTH AFRICA**

HE Mr Adam McCarthy
High Commissioner Designate to South Africa
25 April 2015
ANZAC DAY ADDRESS

Excellencies; distinguished guests; Chief of Navy, South African National Defence Force; current and ex-servicemen and women from all countries; descendants of those who have lost their lives in the service of Australia and New Zealand; Australian and New Zealand compatriots; ladies and gentleman; boys and girls.

Welcome; G'day; Tēnā koutou, tēnā koutou, tēnā kouto, katoa.

We gather together here at dawn, 100 years to the day since approximately 16 000 young Australians and New Zealanders – the original ANZACs – first landed on the beaches of Gallipoli in Turkey during the First World War.

A war 'great' in name only.

A war that impacted on the young Australian and New Zealand nations like nothing before or after.

Of a nation of around 4.5 million at the time, 417 000 Australians enlisted, 332 000 served overseas, 152 000 were wounded.

61 000 never returned.

For New Zealand, with a population of just 1.1 million in 1914, 100 000 served overseas, 41 000 were wounded and around 18 000 lost their lives - one of the highest per capita casualty rates of any nation during the War.

A sacrifice unimaginable.

As the first young ANZACs waded ashore at Gallipoli before dawn on 25 April 1915 – many to their death, 2000 Australians on that first day alone – none of them could have imagined the legacy they would leave in the hearts and minds of our two nations.

Militarily, the Gallipoli campaign that sought to secure the Dardanelles sea passage to Istanbul was a failure.

But from the terrible hardships of the campaign emerged the triumph of human spirit, of ‘mateship’, and of sacrifice

No less heroic than had it been a victory.

Gallipoli marked the birth of the ANZAC spirit.

The birth of the ANZAC legend.

For my speech this morning, I do not want to speak so much as let the ANZACs do the speaking for me.

Allow me first to read some extracts of a letter from Lt William Britt, to his mother describing the landing at Gallipoli, written from a military hospital in Alexandria where he was recovering from his injuries.

"When all was ready the destroyer crept silently away in the darkness. We layed on the deck and had a short sleep. At 3.30 we could see land in the dim light and we crept closer and closer; the big battle ships looming up on either side of us. It was fast getting light and when we were 600 yards from the shore the destroyers stopped and we prepared to get into the boats.

Our first warning was a sharp crack and a flash from the hills in front of us and the ping of a bullet overhead followed by another and then a score. One of our comrades was hit and died after wishing us good luck. We scrambled into the boats, about 50 in each boat, and started to pull for the shore. By this time the bullets were splashing all round the boat and a great many of our fellows were hit; some fatally. We had to row 600 yards in the face of a murderous fire, machine gun and rifle and not a man flinched. We could see the flashes from the hills

in front but not a Turk could we see.

...

I got a bullet through the cap as I stepped out of the water. I threw off my pack and took cover behind a heap of pebbles.”

Lt Britt goes on to say:

“By 5 o'clock things were getting dashed lively, our guns and theirs playing a duet. We got shrapnel at the rate of 10 shells per half minute. Every time a shell would burst over my head the shock of the explosion blew my cap off. I expected to get my head blown off too but I didn't. The rifle bullets were like Bees. I got hit on the wrist, just a scratch, and several went through my clothes without touching me.

...

I was firing away when all of a sudden there was a deafening shock alongside me. I felt a severe blow in the hip, rifle blown out of my hands and I was lifted about two feet in the air. I was unconscious for a while and when I came round I saw what had happened. A shell had burst on my right killing a lot of fellows who were lying near me and wounding me in the right hip. My trousers were soaked with blood and I was in a bad way.

I couldn't use my leg so I got my gun, gave the few cartridges I had left to one of the chaps and crawled back about 40 yards. [W]e struck some Red Cross chaps who tied up my wound and stopped the bleeding. Then they carried me back to the beach

and I was laid on a stretcher with hundreds of others wounded too. Wound was getting very painful by this time. Then I discovered some cigarettes which hadn't got wet. Borrowed a match and life saved”.

Lt Britt recovered from his wounds and was later sent to France where he was killed on 10 June 1918 on the Somme, aged just 25 years old. He is buried in Villers-Bretonneux Military Cemetery.

Just as worthy was the role of the nurses at Gallipoli who attended to thousands of battered and bleeding men on the decks and in the confined wards of the Hospital Ship Gascon anchored offshore.

Sister Ella Tucker wrote a number of diary entries about her time on the ship:

“25 April 1915. Red letter day. Gaba Tepe ... The wounded think the old ship is heaven after the peninsula. There are 557 patients on board and only 7 nurses.”

And later said:

“The wounded from the landing commenced to come on board at 9 am and poured into the ship’s wards from barges and boats. The majority still had on their field dressing and a number of these were soaked through. Two orderlies cut off the

patient's clothes and I started immediately with dressings. There were 76 patients in my ward and I did not finish until 2 am. Every night there are two or three deaths, sometimes five or six; it's just awful flying from one ward into another ... each night is a nightmare, the patients' faces all look so pale with the flickering ship's lights."

Another nurse at Gallipoli, Sister Narrelle Hobbs, wrote:

"I've been a soldier now for nearly three years, and please God I will go right to the end ... if anything happened, and I too passed out, well, there would be no finer way, and no way in which I would be happier, than to lay down one's life for the men who have given everything."

Let their words, and those of their peers, live on to remind us of their courage and selflessness.

An impenetrable bond was forged between Australia and New Zealand at Gallipoli. Today there is no closer a friendship between two nations.

Let us also not forget the young Turkish men and women, who bravely served their nation at Gallipoli and during the War.

We may have fought against each other 100 years ago, but today our nations proudly stand together as friends. Today we share in our remembrance of an event not to be repeated.

We also recognise and express gratitude for the support and sacrifice of all our friends and allies from Gallipoli and onwards.

Few may know that the Japanese Navy Battleship *Ibuki* was part of the convoy of ships that escorted the troops who were to become the first ANZACs across the Indian Ocean, sailing from Albany in Western Australia in November 1914; and we welcome Lieutenant Colonel Ebina, Defence Attaché from the Japanese Embassy, here today.

Let me say, it is particularly fitting that we stand here in South Africa this morning.

It was here during the Anglo-Boer War that Australians fought together for the first time as a Federation, rather than as separate colonies, just after the turn of the 20th century.

Australia and New Zealand are fortunate today to enjoy a relationship with South Africa underpinned by shared values – democracy, freedom, equality and respect.

It is also fitting that we stand here together this morning at Freedom Park.

Freedom. The principle for which the ANZACs fought a century ago, the principle for which South Africans fought through the last century for and the principle for which, as modern nations, we must join together to protect today.

ANZAC Day, of course, is not just honouring those who fought during the Gallipoli campaign or during the First World War.

It is about commemorating all those Australians and New Zealanders, men and women, who have bravely and selflessly served, or continue to serve, our two nations during all conflicts and peace-keeping operations around the world.

They are all ANZACs, just as those young men were who landed at Gallipoli.

100 years of ANZAC.

Let us remember their sacrifice.

Let us remember their valour.

Let us be resolute in our support of peace and freedom for all in honour of their memory.

Lest we forget.