

**Australian Ambassador's Address at ANZAC Centenary Commemoration
The Citadel, Copenhagen
Speech as delivered on ANZAC Day 25 April 2015**

Your Royal Highness
Your Excellencies
Ladies and Gentleman

We gather here to mark a significant and solemn day for Australia. Today is the 100th anniversary of the Gallipoli landings by the Australian and New Zealand Army Corps (the ANZACs). The Gallipoli campaign was Australia's baptism of fire - our first significant overseas military deployment as an independent nation. It was also the birthplace of the ANZAC legend, a story of bravery and sacrifice, which has inspired generations to follow.

Today, the Australian Prime Minister will join tens of thousands of Australians, young and old, on the Gallipoli peninsular. Millions more will attend events like ours today in Australian cities and country towns and across the world.

Let us turn our minds to that fateful morning on 25 April 1915. The amphibious landings at Gallipoli were meant to be a brief and dramatic strike to capture the Dardanelles and then Constantinople to force the Ottoman Empire out of the First World War.

Hours before dawn, in the cold darkness, a massive armada of ships carrying thousands of young Australians, New Zealanders, as well as British, French, Canadian and Indian troops crept towards the coastline.

Tremendous fear and apprehension gripped these young men as they rowed slowly towards the beach. The ANZAC flotilla had been spotted hours before they landed. The Turkish garrisons, strategically located throughout the rugged coastal cliffs, were determined to defend their homeland at all costs. They were led by a brilliant officer, Mustapha Kemal Ataturk, who would go on to be the founder of modern Turkey.

The first Australians struggled ashore at 430am, far from their planned landing spot and were immediately overwhelmed by a devastating display of firepower.

A soldier of the Australian Imperial Force 3rd brigade reported that “. . . the whole side of the mountains seems to be sending forth tongues of flames and the bullets fairly rain upon us . . . the water is churned up from rifle fire, machine guns, Maxims, shrapnel and common shells . . . seven of the boys in our boat are killed and God knows how many others”.

As we know this horrific landing was only the first day of a brutal and bloody eight months on the Gallipoli Peninsular for the ANZAC and allied forces. They did not, despite all their efforts, achieve their military objectives. Over 130,000 allied and Turkish forces were killed, including nearly 9,000 Australians. The only successful part of the campaign was the evacuation. Yet, for many of the young men the war went on. The ANZACs were immediately despatched to other fronts. The Australian Light Horse Brigade, including my then 18 year old great-grandfather, were

despatched for further service in the Middle East, playing a central role in the capture of Jerusalem and Damascus. Thousands of other ANZACs fought with great distinction and helped secure victory on the Western Front.

It is extraordinary to think that all of the ANZACs were volunteers. They joined the fight for many reasons – some were driven by their duty to King and country, others just wanted to be part of what seemed like a great adventure. They came from the bush and the cities, from wealthy backgrounds and amongst the poor. Whatever their motivation, the ANZACs endured the stench and horror of the first industrial scale war. For those who escaped death, their physical and mental scars would never fully heal.

The First World War impacted Australia like nothing else, before or since. The losses were staggering to the Australian community: from a population under five million: 417,000 enlisted; 152,000 were wounded and 61,000 never came home. For us, it was sacrifice on an unprecedented scale.

What are we to take from the horrific losses of Gallipoli and the First World War? Did our service men and women die in vain? To answer this question I quote former Australian Prime Minister Paul Keating who said: “[The Great War] was a lesson about ordinary people – and the lesson was that they were not ordinary. On all sides they were the heroes of that war, not the generals and the politicians, but the soldiers and sailors and nurses – those who taught us to endure hardship, to show courage, to be bold as well as resilient, to believe in ourselves, to stick together.” This Centenary of ANZAC does not seek to glorify war, rather it honours the best and noblest in human nature and calls on us to ponder anew the example of our forebears.

A man who exemplified the ANZAC story was Private Jørgen Christian Jensen. He was born in Denmark but moved to Adelaide in his youth and was naturalised as an Australian in 1914. He enlisted for his new country, survived Gallipoli only to be sent to the western front. In Noreuil, he fought with great courage to defend his mates and for his actions he was awarded Australia’s highest military honour, the Victoria Cross. He didn’t stop there – he went on to fight at Villers-Brettonneux, where he was badly injured. He returned to Australia at the end of the war only to die a few years later as a result of his injuries. Private Jensen’s remarkable exploits are honoured at the Australian War memorial in Canberra and on Remembrance Day last year I had the privilege of laying a wreath at a memorial for him in the town of his birth.

The war that was supposed to end all wars in fact sowed the seeds of a second. This year we also mark the 70th anniversary of the end of World War II. Almost a million Australian men and women served the war effort in support of Great Britain in Europe and then with the United States in defence of our own homeland which came under attack in 1942. Australians enlisted once again out of patriotic duty and to contribute to the vital struggle for peace. They knew that if the struggle were lost, the world would be a very different place. They knew that tyranny successful somewhere eroded freedom everywhere. They fought and died to prevent that happening.

As part of this massive effort, Royal Australian Air force aircrews were among the first Australians to head to Europe. Over the course of the war, 11,000 airmen were killed - 1400 were never found.

Not many Australians are aware that their airmen were involved in dangerous missions in and around Denmark, including delivering aid and equipment to the Danish resistance. 68 Australian airmen killed in action, are buried in sites across Denmark.

These men are not just names on honour rolls or 'serial numbers'. They were sons, brothers, husbands and fathers. Last year I received a letter from Ms Cherry Hinds of Woodcroft South Australia. She told me that in early 2014 she visited, for the first time, the grave of her father Kenneth Albert Ayres at Tranebjerg cemetery on Samsø Island. She is now 71 years of age but was only ten months old when her father's Lancaster was shot down over Denmark. Ms Hinds told me she would like to think that the lives of her father and his crew had not been in vain, especially given that so many countries now live in peace. I assured her that the Australian and Danish people would always remember his sacrifice. Your presence here today is testament to that. Over the last year, my embassy colleagues and I have visited sites where these airmen are buried. We have attended moving 70th anniversary commemoration ceremonies in Copenhagen, in Stadil, in Loegstoer, in Tarm and Fredericia.

The memorial in Fredericia, includes the gravesite of Flight Sargent Richard French, who was killed with five other members of his British/Australian crew in 1945. The memorial site was first unveiled in 1949. At the time, the then local commandant delivered a moving tribute to the fallen allied airmen, which was relayed to French's grieving family in Australia. He said on 25 October 1949 "As far as I know, this tomb is the only one where foreign soldiers fighting for Denmark and freedom are buried here in Fredericia. I am happy that the church has found such a fair resting place for [them] . . . As long as a Danish garrison is quartered in the town, we Danish soldiers will never forget this tomb, and on behalf of the Danish soldiers I pronounce – honoured be their memory". It is wonderful to know that so many Danes and Australians continue to visit these sites and honour the memory of these airmen.

I want to take this opportunity to acknowledge publicly the dedication of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission's 'Team Denmark' - who have done so much to ensure the graves and memorials are protected and remain a fitting tribute to our war dead.

On ANZAC Day, we reflect on the deaths of all Australians who have fought to promote international peace and security. Our war dead are scattered across far flung lands, in Korea, Malaysia, Vietnam, Iraq and Afghanistan. They lie in over a hundred cemeteries or are remembered on just as many memorials.

Over recent decades, both Australia and Denmark have deployed our armed forces where they can make a difference – to help address global security challenges and in response to humanitarian and natural disasters.

Today, there are Australian and Danish troops in both Afghanistan and Iraq. They are training the next generation of Afghan and Iraqi armed forces. They are there not just for the freedom and the security of those countries but for the freedom and the security of our countries, too. They are going abroad, to uphold our interests and our values, and to keep us safe.

So on this day of remembrance, let us reflect on all those who have served and continue to serve our nations.

Lest we forget