



TAS Anzac Service 27 April, 2021

Address by Dr Peter Gaden (90-00, RAN Ret'd)

Thank you Mr Jones for the introduction. I would like to start by congratulating the Guard for your impressive performance this morning. I know how much training you have put into today – I can tell you it is even more impressive from where I stand here today than I remember it when I stood where you are years ago.

Thank you for the honour of allowing me to speak to you at your ANZAC Service. ANZAC Day marks the anniversary of the landing at Gallipoli. We meet here today, not to celebrate battle or to glorify war, but to remember those who have served our country during conflict and crisis.

Anzac Day 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 and resourcefulness. The spirit of ANZAC, which was passed onto us from battlefields long ago, will live on because it is a reflection of the very heart of our nation.

I don't think anyone can fully appreciate how things are in the present until they have the benefit of passing years, and time for reflection. It was 21 years ago today that I stood amongst you as a Year 12 student at TAS doing this very dawn service parade. I was in the Guard, I was cold, tired, and I just wanted the service to finish so that I could get my jumper back on. I was listening to the names being read from the Honour Roll – names from a past time, names that didn't seem too relevant to me.

Twelve years after leaving school on Anzac Day I was standing on the flight deck of the Frigate HMAS Melbourne. I was her Medical Officer, we were somewhere in the Red Sea in the Middle East Area of Operations on Operation Slipper. The Executive Officer was reading the names of the significant number of Naval ships that had been sunk with all souls lost within the visible horizon. We were an active warship in sacred seas. I was hot, tired, and a small part of me wanted the service to finish so I could get inside into the air conditioning.

It is sometimes difficult to understand why it is with gratitude that we should pause to remember. We must remind ourselves that we have enjoyed the benefits of this peace and easy existence, which was purchased at the cost of many lives.

The names that you will hear today are not just names. I have a heavy heart because there have been new names added to that list since my school days – names from a very recent and relevant past. When I was in Year 10 standing here with you, I was in the Guard but I was also the Corporal of 4 Platoon. Standing amongst you on Front Field was my Lance Corporal. He was a cheeky short red head who could get a fire going to warm up the platoon no matter how wet, cold and miserable the conditions. I knew him affectionately as Fuss – you will hear his name being read out today as Lieutenant Michael Fussell, who was killed in Afghanistan in 2008. I can see now that these names are your platoon mates, your classmates, your friends, your brothers. I pray that your name never gets added to that list.

These names are important and regular reminders of the losses our nation has felt in darker days. It is a long standing tradition that on ANZAC Day we all pause to remember those that offered up their life in the defence of their nation and community. This tradition is as relevant today as it was when our troops landed on the beaches of Gallipoli in 1915.

I think of honour and pride when I hear the word Veteran. We must remember that Veterans are not just of past forgotten wars - some of my friends and family are themselves veterans, despite still being in their 20's and 30's. In my current role as a civilian General Practitioner, I look after a significant number of Veterans. I can tell you first hand that Operational Deployments take their toll. Scars both visible and hidden can last a lifetime. Whilst I am extremely proud to honour and care for our Veterans, I have great sadness that we are still resorting to war and conflict in this day and age. Today, a new generation of our soldiers, sailors and airmen are continuing to serve in troubled locations around the world, protecting Australia's sovereignty and honouring the ANZAC spirit.

I want each and every student here today to stop and think about how you will serve your community to make this nation worth the ANZAC's sacrifice. Serving the nation takes many forms, not just the Armed Forces. Join a community organisation like the SES or bushfire brigade, volunteer to coach a kids soccer team, take an elderly resident shopping. Check on you neighbours. Take care of your community. If each of you embodies the ANZAC spirit in your own way, we will honour them.

The men and women who forged the ANZAC spirit understood the values of respect, independence, freedom and community. Above all, they possessed a willingness to defend these things when need be.

Freedom only survives as long as we have people who are willing to defend it. That is the spirit ANZAC handed down to us. If we lose that ANZAC spirit, we lose all. Lest we Forget.