



The

a competition for

Simpson

year 9 and 10 students

Prize

2009 runner-up
South Australia

Duncan Soang
Prince Alfred College

World War I had a devastating effect on Australian society. Why should we commemorate our participation in this conflict?

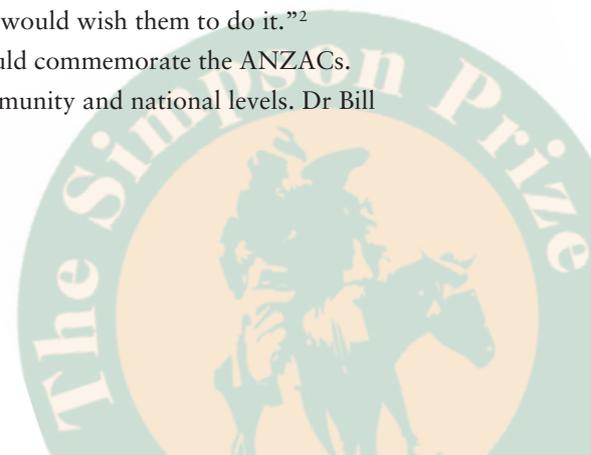
by Duncan Soang, Prince Alfred College

The Great War from 1914 to 1918 had a heavy socio-economic impact on Australian society however it also marked a moment in time where Australians established a legend that lives on to this very day. The legend of the ANZACs began on the 25th of April 1915 in the face of heavy Turkish fire, when the ANZACs made their first impact on the war during the allied assault on the Dardanelles. They displayed immense amounts of courage and made huge sacrifices throughout the Gallipoli campaign and also on the Western Front. The national identity of Australia was also shaped through the heroic qualities of the ANZACs, such as bravery, selflessness and mateship, which have inspired a nation to attempt to replicate them in everyday life. However, the Great War was a ghastly experience for those who took part. Trench warfare was an atrocity that modern society should use as a learning experience and commemorate the day as a reminder of the horrors of war.

The First World War resulted in the deaths of 60,000 Australians with approximately 156,000 more listed as casualties and the sacrifice of these brave and courageous soldiers is a reason to commemorate Australia's participation in the war. To sacrifice one's life for benefit of your nation is an extremely difficult decision to make, but not for the ANZACs. Lieutenant C. H. Ruddle served in Gallipoli in 1915. In one of his diary entries he wrote "the trenches red with the lifeblood of my comrades, it is only the fact... (That) the integrity of the Empire is at stake that lifts our spirits up again to face the grim horrors of the battlefield."¹ Many ANZACs like Ruddle shared the same beliefs. They sacrificed everything for the good of the nation. This bravery is also demonstrated through the seven Victoria Crosses awarded to Australians at the Battle of Lone Pine. It is important to acknowledge the sacrifices the ANZACs made in the war but it is also important that the idea of service for the nation be perpetuated. Australian journalist C. E. W. Bean wrote "They're not heroes. They do not intend to be thought or spoken of as heroes. They're just ordinary Australians, doing their particular work as their country would wish them to do it."² The concept of service is yet another reason why we should commemorate the ANZACs. Ordinary Australians even to this day serve on both community and national levels. Dr Bill

¹ Lieutenant C.H. Ruddle – Gallipoli 1915

² C. E. W Bean - A journalist in the First World War



Griggs AM is a world authority on trauma medicine. He has served both Australia and the world, through his efforts in helping treat those injured from the Bali Bombings in 2002 and 2005 and also the Asian Tsunami in 2004. Yet Dr Griggs lives as an ordinary Australian, serving the nation and the world. We must commemorate our participation in World War One as we remember the brave sacrifices of the ANZACs and constantly inspire ordinary Australians to serve the nation.

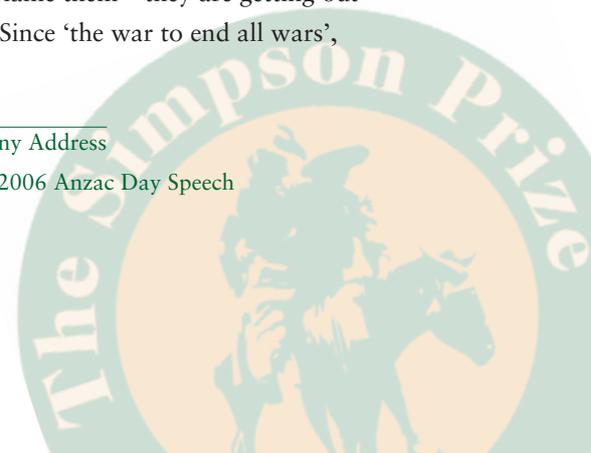
The national identity of Australia was greatly influenced by the actions of the ANZACs and their characteristics while fighting in the First World War and this is another reason why we should commemorate our participation in the war. Kevin Rudd said “I have an absolute confidence that these values run deep in the veins of young Australians.”³ These values do run deep in every Australian. The actions of the ANZACs in World War One constructed this identity, of bravery, courage, the never say die attitude and mateship. The sacrifice they made and the bravery they showed has inspired every young Australian alive today. A nation’s identity cannot be formed easily. Major General Bill Crews said “it was in the horror of warfare, where lives are destroyed and the dreams of our youth are forever lost, that our national identity was forged.”⁴ The identity of Australians not only consists of bravery, and courage, but also extends to mateship and camaraderie. The characteristic of mateship extends far through modern society. The ANZACs fought in the Great War alongside Britain, France, Russia, India and New Zealand, representing the Empire. They fought as global ‘mates’. This is shown in modern times by the actions of Australians as global ‘mates’ during the Asian Tsunamis. This catastrophic phenomenon occurred quite a distance from Australia, yet Australia led the world to help by announcing a \$1 billion aid package, within a week of the disaster. Australia is a multicultural society, with people from nations all around the world living here. We are a member of the United Nations, and continually provide aid to troubled nations. We are global ‘mates’, and should commemorate our participation in World War One, as a moment which shaped our national identity, and which the concept of global mateship by Australians began.

The First World War was host to many atrocities including trench life and warfare, with the number of deaths and casualties not rivalled by any other war, it is important that Australia commemorates our participation in this monstrosity so that we can learn and try to avoid it. Life in the trenches was disgusting. The ghastly smell of thousands of corpses that littered the area mixed with little sleep and constant artillery bombardments and enemy machine gun fire made life horrible. Dysentery and typhoid fever amongst others spread rapidly due to the poor hygiene and rotting corpses. Australia alone ended up with 60,000 dead and 156,000 wounded. Many soldiers considered being wounded a good thing as you were able to escape the repulsive conditions. J. A. Raws wrote in his diary “poor wounded devils you meet on stretchers are laughing with glee. Who can blame them – they are getting out of this.”⁵ It is obvious to those involved, that war is vile. Since ‘the war to end all wars’,

³ Hon. Prime Minister Kevin Rudd – 2008 Anzac Day Ceremony Address

⁴ National President of the RSL - Major General Bill Crews – 2006 Anzac Day Speech

⁵ 2nd Lieutenant J. A. Raws – France 1916



Australia has been involved in five main wars. It is human nature to fight, and as a result war is unavoidable, however, commemorating our participation in World War One serves as a constant reminder of the horrors of war, and as a means to restrict the occurrence and impact of war. This is achievable through the use of peacekeepers in areas such as in East Timor. Former Prime Minister John Howard said “Our soldiers go to East Timor as part of a great Australian military tradition, which has never sought to impose the will of this country on others, but only to defend what is right.”⁶ We should commemorate our participation in this horrible conflict to remind ourselves of the horrors of war, and how to take measures to avoid it.

Australia’s involvement in the First World War saw bravery, courage, sacrifice and nationalism shine through. In horrific conditions, our heroic soldiers toiled as a means to ensure our freedom. They sacrificed their lives or wellbeing for the good of our nation. Their actions forged our national identity. They unified a nation emotionally and borne the Australian spirit. However, their experiences all serve as a reminder of the horrors of war and this can be used as a learning experience. It is because of this that we should commemorate our involvement in this war. As Prime Minister Rudd said in his Anzac Day address in 2008 “Freedom is always purchased by sacrifice.”

Bibliography

- McLachlan, M, *The Diggers’ War: Australia in the Great War 1914–1918*, n.d. Accessed 23 November 2008 <http://www.diggertours.com/diary.htm>
- Australian War Memorial, *First World War*, n.d, Accessed 22 November 2008 <http://www.awm.gov.au/atwar/ww1.asp>
- Australian War Memorial, *Private John Simpson Kirkpatrick*, n.d, Accessed 20 November 2008 <http://www.awm.gov.au/people/234.asp>.
- Rudd, K, *Prime Minister of Australia – Speech – Anzac Day National Ceremony*, Last Updated 25 April 2008, Accessed 23 November. http://www.pm.gov.au/media/Speech/2008/speech_0223.cfm
- Crews, B, *Anzac Day 2006: Address by Major General Bill Crews*, Last Updated 25 April 2006, Accessed 22 November 2008, http://www.awm.gov.au/commemoration/anzac/2006_speech_crews.asp
- Anzac Day Commemoration Committee, “*Come on Mate, I’ll Give You a Hand*” n.d. Accessed 25 November 2008 http://www.anzacday.org.au/education/activities/east_timor/images/inv6.pdf
- The Age, “*Australian aid sets the standard: Oxfam – Asia Tsunami*” Last Updated 6 January 2005, Accessed 27 November 2008, <http://www.theage.com.au/news/Asia-tsunami/PM-pledges-1bn-in-aid/2005/01/06/1104832185285.html>

⁶ Prime Minister John Howard 19 September 1999 – Address to the Nation

