



2025 INDIGENOUS VETERANS COMMEMORATION SERVICE

School engagement and resources



Indigenous Veterans Commemoration Service 2025

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Background

The inaugural Indigenous Veterans Commemoration Service in Sydney took place in 2007, following the formation of a planning committee made up of representatives from Aboriginal organisations, the Returned and Services League (NSW) and the Department of Veterans' Affairs. The planning committee has expanded to now include representatives from each of the three school sectors, the NSW Office for Veterans Affairs and Reconciliation NSW.

The Commemoration Service took place in the last week of May 2007, to coincide with Reconciliation Week and has been held each year since. It commemorates the service of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander veterans, combining conventional military protocol with Indigenous ceremonial display and with a focus on attendance by school children.

2025 Indigenous Veterans Commemoration Service

- Now in its 19th year the Indigenous Veterans Commemoration Service will be held on Friday 30 May 2025, on the Northern Forecourt at the Anzac Memorial, Hyde Park Sydney.
- There will be limited seating capacity for invited guests and the three school sectors will be represented by respective schools and students.
- The Committee encourages schools across NSW to conduct their own local service, either on Friday 30 May, or a suitable day within Reconciliation Week (27 May to 3 June).
- The Commemoration will be livestreamed on the Anzac Memorial and RSL NSW's Facebook page allowing the community to view the Service from their homes, workplace or school.
Anzac Memorial Facebook – <https://www.facebook.com/AnzacMemorial>
RSL NSW Facebook – <https://www.facebook.com/RSLNewSouthWales>

Curriculum

Secondary – Syllabus links:

History K-10, Stage 5 Core Study- Depth Study 3: Australians at War: World Wars I and II (1914-1918, 1939-1945)

Content:

- Commemorations and the nature of the Anzac legend

Students:

- Explain how and why Australians have commemorated the wars

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National Reconciliation Week

- National Reconciliation Week (NRW) is a time for all Australians to learn about our shared histories, cultures, and achievements, and to explore how each of us can contribute to achieving reconciliation in Australia.
- The dates for NRW remain the same each year; 27 May to 3 June. These dates commemorate two significant milestones in the reconciliation journey— the successful 1967 referendum, and the High Court Mabo decision respectively.
- NRW started as the Week of Prayer for Reconciliation in 1993 (International Year of the World's Indigenous Peoples) and Australia's first National Reconciliation Week launched in 1996.
- In 2001, Reconciliation Australia was established to continue to provide national leadership on reconciliation. In the same year, approximately 300,000 people walked across Sydney Harbour Bridge as part of National Reconciliation Week-and subsequently across bridges in cities and towns-to show their support for reconciliation.
- Today, National Reconciliation Week is celebrated in workplaces, schools and early learning centres, by community organisations and groups and individuals Australia-wide. Hundreds of NRW events are held each year.
- The National Reconciliation Week 2025 theme, "Bridging Now to Next", reflects the ongoing connection between past, present and future and urges us to look ahead and continue the push forward as past lessons guide us. It calls on all Australians to step forward together.
- For more information and downloadable resources visit Reconciliation Australia:
www.reconciliation.org.au/our-work/national-reconciliation-week/
- For NSW events and the NSW 2025 National Reconciliation Week Virtual Breakfast visit:
<https://reconciliationnsw.org.au/national-reconciliation-week/>

Curriculum:

Primary – Syllabus links:

History K-10 (2012), Stage 2 – Community and Remembrance

Content:

- Days and weeks celebrated or commemorated in Australia (including Australia Day, Anzac Day, Harmony Week, National Reconciliation Week, NAIDOC Week, National Sorry Day) and the importance of symbols and emblems.
- See more dates here:
https://reconciliationnsw.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/RecNSW_significant-Dates-A3V7-1.pdf

Students:

- Identify and describe local, state and national symbols and discuss the origins, symbolism and significance, eg the school logo, Australian and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander flags, coats of arms from states and Australia.
- Identify important Australian celebrations and commemorations and discuss their origins and significance in society.

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Organising a local school commemoration service

Thank you for organising a commemoration service at your school. We have developed some information below to help you commemorate the service and sacrifice of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander veterans.

- **Option 1** – Arrange for the school to watch the live stream of the Commemoration Service at the Anzac Memorial on Friday 30 May 2025.
- **Option 2** – Conduct a school service that includes the ceremonial components and a local wreath laying ceremony in your hall or classroom during the Service.
- **Download and print the Order of Service from the event page.**
- **Download and print the Commemoration Poster.**

Option 1 – Watch the live stream of the Commemoration Service at the Anzac Memorial

- The Commemoration Service live stream will be on the Anzac Memorial Facebook page
- Please 'Like' the page via <https://www.facebook.com/AnzacMemorial>
- At 10:30am on Friday 30 May there will be a holding slide "Live stream starting soon" and you can click this to view the live stream, pre-service activities commence at 10:40am

Option 2 – Conduct your own school service

- You can conduct your own school service which links to the Service at the Anzac Memorial
- The Commemoration Service live stream will be on the Anzac Memorial Facebook page
- In the week leading up to the service, students can learn about the importance of **The Ode, the Last Post, the minute's silence and the Rouse** through this [link](#)
- Students will also be able to learn about the importance of **wreaths** and commemorating the service and sacrifice of our veterans.
- Additional information and resources on how to make a wreath decorated with leaves and flowers that are native to your local region are available on pages 5-6.

Event runsheet / Order of Service

You will be able to pause the live stream, or play it at another time similar to a video that you can pause to incorporate elements with students at your school.

- **Wreath laying** - during the wreath laying portion of the service, you can pause the video and lay a floral tribute locally.
- **The Ode** – select a student from your school to recite The Ode live during the service. When the MC introduces The Ode you should mute the video, have the selected student stand up and face their fellow students and recite The Ode.
- Students can respond with We Will Remember Them, and the Lest We Forget
- Students can sing along to the Australian National Anthem during the service.

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Wreaths – A symbol of commemoration

We encourage schools to make a wreath or floral tribute utilising local native materials, as opposed to purchasing them. This is a more cost effective option for you, allows for a class activity to take place and helps us reduce waste and avoid using items that are not able to be recycled.

The connection to your local flora and native plant life is an important element of the service, as they link to country and this simple activity will help reinforce this message.

To the ancient Romans, a wreath of laurel leaves was a symbol of bravery, strength and triumph. Its meaning can be traced back to Greek mythology. Since the Victorian era, wreaths of flowers woven into a circle have been laid on graves to represent life and resurrection.

Wreaths are a symbol of commemoration, and the Indigenous Veterans Commemoration Service Committee acknowledges the importance of local representation from your school and local area.

Wreaths have been laid at memorials to remember those Australians who died in service during wars, conflicts and peacekeeping operations since the First World War. Laying a wreath of flowers is a way to show respect and an integral part of many commemorative ceremonies.

Traditionally during the Indigenous Veterans Commemoration Service, the first wreath is placed in the Pool of Reflection. An elder passes the wreath to two students, symbolising the traditional connection between the water, the earth and the sky.

Video – Wreaths as a commemorative symbol

This video focuses on wreaths as a commemorative symbol to help us honour and remember people who have died in war. The video is part of a series developed to support the Here They Come - A Day to Remember picture book and animated video, designed for lower primary school students.

Link: <https://anzacportal.dva.gov.au/resources/wreaths-here-they-come-day-remember>

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Local flora and native plants

The Committee encourages schools to make a wreath or floral tribute utilising local native materials, as opposed to purchasing them. This is a more cost effective option for you, allows for a class activity to take place and helps us reduce waste and avoid using items that are not able to be recycled.

The connection to your local flora and native plant life is an important element of the service, as they link to country.

You can search for your local flora species on the following website:

<https://plantnet.rbgsyd.nsw.gov.au/search/spatial.htm>

Simply enter your local government area and hit search.

PlantNET

→ NSW FloraOnline
Introduction
Plant Name Search
Index Search
→ Spatial Search
Identification Keys
Classification
Glossary
→ HerbLink (Type Images)
→ NSW WeedAlert
→ Other PlantNET Sites
→ Other Data Sources

NEW SOUTH WALES FLORA ONLINE

Spatial Search

Select ONE of the following THREE spatial options;
AND if required, select the plant group(s) to include in your search

1. List Species in a pre-defined area by :

State Forests
National Parks
Catchment Management Areas
IBRA Regions
EUROBODALLA Local Government area
Botanical Subdivision

OR

2. List species by a Bounding box :
(enter N and E only for a point)

North: [] Deg. [] Min. S
South: [] Deg. [] Min. S
East: [] Deg. [] Min. E
West: [] Deg. [] Min. E

OR

3. Enter the name of a town
[], state NSW

Select Query radius ☐ 1 km ☐ 2.5 km ☐ 5 km ☐ 10 km ☐ 25 km

AND

Select Threatened or Introduced Plants :

☒ All taxa
☐ Threatened species
☐ Introduced plants only

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Curriculum:

Primary – Syllabus links:

Geography K-10

Content:

- Students explore the climate, natural vegetation and native animals of places in Australia and Asia.
- They examine the importance of natural vegetation and natural resources to the environment, animals and people and learn about the ways people value environments, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples.
- Students identify sustainable practices and recognise that there are differing views on how sustainability can be achieved.

Students:

- Investigate connections that people, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples, have to local and global places, for example: ACHGK010, ACHGK011, ACHGK012.
- Discussion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples' connections with land, sea and animals of their place.
- Description of reasons people are connected to places in Australia and/or countries across the world eg birthplace.

Curriculum:

Secondary – Syllabus links:

Geography K-10

Content: Landscapes and Landforms (Stage 4)

- Students explore landscapes and landforms using examples from Australia and throughout the world.
- They explain processes that create landscapes and shape individual landforms and they describe the value of landscapes and landforms to different people.
- Students examine issues of land degradation and ways to manage and protect landscapes and landforms. Students also investigate a natural hazard associated with landscapes and people's responses to that hazard.

Students:

- Investigate the aesthetic, cultural, spiritual and economic value of landscapes and landforms for people, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples, for example: (ACHGK049)
- Explanation of the aesthetic value of landscapes and landforms to culture and identity.
- Description of the cultural and spiritual value of landscapes or landforms in different places.
- Identification of how a landscape can have economic value for different people.

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Making a wreath

Follow these instructions to make your own wreath.

You'll need:

- cardboard box, wire or dough base
- green wreath wrap or paper or ribbon
- ribbon or twine
- leaves, native flowers or foliage
- scissors
- pencil or pen
- glue
- paper for a card

What to do:

1. Design the base shape (circle, chaplet or other) with wrap or ribbon and secure it with glue.
2. Add the leaves in layers, starting from the top, with the pointy ends of the leaves pointing upwards (in the same direction).
3. Add the local flora in a small cluster at the bottom of the wreath, or as a bunch.
4. Place the ribbon on the wreath, either across or on an angle.
5. Add a small card with the words 'We will remember them', 'Lest we forget' or your school emblem



Circle wreath



Chaplet wreath (tear shape)

Examples from previous commemorations



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Research a veteran

A project that might also be of interest to teachers and students is 'Research a veteran'.

This resource guides users through the process of researching historical records if an Australian First World War veteran.

The resource can be viewed on the following website:

<https://app.education.nsw.gov.au/rap/resource/access/d06fe00b-7dcc-4dae-8fc4-1f5d41fc571d/1>

Students will examine the significance of:

- Australia's involvement in the First World War
- The lasting consequences of the First World War
- The impact of the First World War on developing Australian identities then and now.