

David Harris

Minister for Aboriginal Affairs and Treaty
Minister for Gaming and Racing
Minister for Veterans
Minister for Medical Research
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Media Release

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Veterans honoured during National Reconciliation Week

Friday, 30 May 2025

First Nations veterans are being honoured today at the 2025 Indigenous Veterans Commemoration Service which will be held at the Anzac Memorial in Hyde Park Sydney.

The service is hosted by the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Veterans & Services Association and is proudly supported by the NSW Government, the education sector and RSL NSW.

Minister for Veterans and Minister for Aboriginal Affairs and Treaty David Harris will attend the service alongside other dignitaries to pay tribute and honour the service and sacrifice of Indigenous veterans and recognise their contributions to the defence of our nation.

This is the 19th annual commemoration since its inception in 2007 and traditionally takes place on the last Friday in May, to coincide with National Reconciliation Week (27 May – 3 June).

The commemoration is attended by schools and focuses on educating the next generation on the history of Indigenous contributions to our defence forces, spanning from the Boer War in 1899 through to recent operations and peacekeeping.

This year's commemoration will also be attended by schools participating in the second annual NSW Government Regional Youth Program. This program provides the opportunity for schools from each of the three school sectors to travel from regional NSW to Sydney to attend the Commemoration.

This year students from St Raphael's Catholic School in Cowra, Clarence Valley Anglican School in Grafton and Koorringal High School in Wagga Wagga will have the opportunity to participate in today's service.

Students will have the opportunity to meet members of the organising committee including Chair, Uncle Harry Allie who served in the Air Force and Mr Dave Williams who served in the Navy. Master of Ceremonies, Squadron Leader Coen Henry and guest speaker, Lieutenant Colonel Joseph West who will share their personal experiences as current serving members of the Defence Force.

Minister for Veterans and Aboriginal Affairs and Treaty David Harris said:

"As Minister for Veterans, and the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs and Treaty, I know how important it is we commemorate and remember the service and sacrifice of our Indigenous veterans.

"This commemoration is an important occasion to recognise and celebrate the invaluable role Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have played in defending our country.

"I would like to acknowledge all the schools who will be in attendance today, by educating your students on the service and sacrifice of our veterans ensures their legacy lives on and inspires the next generation.

"National Reconciliation Week is a time for our community to learn more about our Aboriginal culture, history and achievements and specifically the contributions of our Indigenous veterans and current serving Indigenous members of the Defence Force. I thank you for your service."

Uncle Harry Allie AM BEM Chair Indigenous Veterans Commemoration said:

"As a proud descendant of the Gudjala people, a veteran of 23 years in the Royal Australian Air Force, and inaugural RAAF Indigenous Elder, it is pleasing to see this important commemoration continue to take place, honouring the service and sacrifice of Indigenous veterans.

"My family's connection to Defence, and service to our nation commenced with my uncle in the Great War and another uncle, my aunty and father in the Second World War. Like many other Indigenous veterans have experienced, there were mixed feelings about our inclusion early on, but our commitment to service in the Navy, Air Force or Army has never wavered.

"This commemoration continues to offer an opportunity to educate current and future generations of the service and the sacrifice given by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander veterans. To have so many schools and students attending the commemoration here at the Anzac Memorial, or able to view the livestream, is wonderful to see and I hope that each of them has learnt a little more about the contributions made by Indigenous veterans."

Ms Tobie Kate Hubber student at St Raphael's Catholic School said:

"It is a wonderful opportunity to participate in the Regional Youth program and learn more about the contributions of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander service men and women, and see them get the recognition that they deserve."

Mr Izaak Christian student at Clarence Valley Anglican School said:

"I'm incredibly honoured and excited to have the opportunity to travel to Sydney for the Indigenous Veterans Commemoration Service. This opportunity allows me to pay my respects to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander service men and women who have bravely served our country. I have learned more about their stories, and will help to ensure their contributions are remembered and celebrated."

Ms Harlee Stearman student at Koorringal High School said:

"As a proud Wiradjuri person, it is an honour to visit the Anzac Memorial today and pay tribute to Indigenous veterans for their service and sacrifice. Their courage and dedication to protecting our country deserves our deepest respect, and will ensure that their stories are never forgotten. Lest we forget."

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