

PREMIER'S ADDRESS
KOREAN WAR VETERANS' RECEPTION
SUNDAY 25 JULY 2010

During Australia's first century, war cast a long and almost constant shadow.

And so we must never allow conflict and courage like that shown on the Korean peninsula to slip from our memories.

This week we commemorate the end of fighting in Korea some 57 years ago.

Enormous sacrifices were made between June 25, 1950 when the enemy forces from North Korea invaded the South and July 27, 1953 when an armistice was finally agreed.

With the shots of World War 2 still ringing in collective ears, Australians once-again answered the call to defend freedom and democracy, in an unfamiliar land, full of mountainous terrain and in extremes of heat and cold.

Troops who had been stationed in Japan as part of occupation forces sprang back into action.

Our naval and air forces were also called into the battle responding with United Nations forces in the first days after the North Korean invasion.

South Koreans and Australians fought side by side in the cause of peace and freedom striving together with 20 other nations to repel the aggressor.

Our forces in Korea faced tremendous hardship and deprivation during those years.

Millions of lives were lost including 340 Australians and, tragically more than 130,000 South Korean soldiers.

On this day in 1953 fighting remained intense.

Heavy shelling and mortar fire on July 25 were a prelude to one last determined infantry attack on positions doggedly held by Australians.

It was to be the last major engagement of the War.

And thus “The Hook” became one of eleven battlefields whose name lives on in the pages of Australia’s military history.

Each of these battlefields is now inscribed in the New South Wales Korean War Memorial dedicated just one year ago in Moore Park.

Our Korean War Memorial is a tangible expression of the friendship between Australians and South Koreans initially forged through war and which continues to bloom in peace.

Memorials are a silent testimony to both past sacrifice and future hope.

They help us retell the story of the achievements of our servicemen and women to future generations.

So I am proud to have with us today eight senior high school students and two teachers recipients of 2010 Premier’s ANZAC Memorial Scholarships who recently visited Korea in the company of Minister Terenzini to represent NSW at the 60th anniversary commemorations held in Seoul on June 25.

We have the privilege today of hearing from two of the scholars giving account of their pilgrimage through Korea to commemorate the Korean War.

A visit that I hope only will be many further opportunities for school and veterans exchanges to mark remembrance and build the relationship between the people of the Republic of Korea and NSW.

Today, we enjoy a lasting friendship based on common values and shared prosperity.

But we do not forget that our friendship was initially met in the furnace of war.

Our gratitude goes to all who endured hardship and made sacrifices in the service of their country and in the name of freedom.

And today we affirm that they always be remembered by those who follow us.

Lest we forget.