ADDRESS BY THE PREMIER OF NEWS SOUTH WALES THE HONOURABLE BARRY O'FARRELL ANZAC DAY MEMORIAL SERVICE HYDE PARK 25 APRIL 2011

A very great wartime leader and orator once reflected on the inadequacy of the words of a politician to truly describe the nature of sacrifice in war. Dedicating the national monument at Gettysburg, among the freshly dug graves of thousands of his countrymen, Abraham Lincoln remarked: "The world will little note, nor long remember, what we *say* here, but it can never forget what they *did* here." Nowhere is the chasm between words and action as great as in the willing sacrifice of a young life for an ideal.

If I cannot match Lincoln's eloquence, may I - at least – seek to emulate his humility. Mere words *do* fail to convey the depth of the meaning of ANZAC. To me the poignancy of the minute's silence and the melancholy of a lone bugle sounding the Last Post are the most telling sounds of ANZAC Day. Words invariably fail to capture the sadness of single young life cut short. When that loss is compounded by the hundreds of thousands the limitations of language are all too manifest.

In his elegiac work *Gallipoli,* the Australian writer Les Carlyon estimated that by dusk on the 25th of April 1915 over two thousand young Australians were dead wounded and missing on the Gallipoli Peninsula. The scale of that carnage among a population of slightly more than 4 million can barely be imagined today. To put that cruel arithmetic into perspective 23 Australian soldiers have died in Afghanistan since 2001 and 504 died during the entire Vietnam War.

Yet amid all the death and chaos something was being born. Those with a gift for language, and eye for posterity such as the celebrated war correspondent CEW Bean could discern the outlines of distinctly national character and consciousness forming, even as the First Australian Imperial Force had been training in Egypt.

Their British commander Lieutenant General Sir William Birdwood had observed a rough and ready manner, spiced with profanity and a certain irreverent humour, coupled with a lack of deference towards authority. They were markedly different in demeanour to their New Zealand cousins.

When they enlisted they were still acutely aware of their state identities. But while being forged into an Army in Egypt the seeds of a national consciousness were sown. Its green shoots sprouted on that Fatal Shore at Gallipoli. When General Bridges, the commander of the First Australian Division, found stragglers on the beach shirking the fight when he came ashore on the first morning, his rebuke to them was calculated to shame them into resuming the assault was “Remember that your are Australians.” No more was needed.

The stories of two New South Wales men provide an insight into this broader phenomenon. Joe and Oliver Cumberland were brothers from Scone in the Hunter Valley. At 20, Joe was reputed to be the youngest train driver in New South Wales. His older brother had gone bush in search of work. Young Joe rushed to enlist within weeks of the outbreak of war. Feeling protective of his little brother Oliver went south to be with him.

As he explained in a letter to their sister Una: “I could not see Joe go alone and remain behind myself…I promise you I will never leave Joe wounded on the field whilst I have the strength to carry him off, and I know he will do the same for me.” They joined the 2nd Battalion and Una proudly wore a brooch of purple and green in the colours of that unit.

Like the other men from New South Wales they were quartered at Randwick and Kensington race courses. Without enough tents or uniforms to go around they slept in the civilian clothes in the grandstands. Both went ashore on the first day at Gallipoli. Joe was killed in action some time between the landing and the first of May. Oliver was wounded and evacuated to Egypt where he leant of his brother’s death.

Later he returned to the front. He died during the Lone Pine offensive and his body was not recovered. Una waited in vain for news having been told initially that his wounds were superficial. Not until March 1916 was she formally notified of his death. In 1922 his remains were recovered and his identity discs sent to Una. The inconsolable grief of that young woman can only be imagined. It spread across our fledgling nation on the scale of an epidemic.

Nothing prepared this young nation for the scale of loss of the Great War. Our national obsession with Gallipoli has tended to eclipse the magnitude of casualties on the Western Front. The exuberance of Gallipoli- that first dawn before our illusions were smashed - has proved to be a more amenable foundation myth than the remorseless attrition and stalemate of France and Belgium.

And indeed, ANZAC has come to occupy a central place in our national psyche. It has grown beyond a day of recollection of those who have died in war. Intuitively, Australians feel that this day tells us something essential about who we are, and who we should aspire to be. Many consider this day to be our authentic national day.

Some caution needs to be exercised in that regard. The great strength of ANZAC Day is in its accessibility to all Australians. Narratives about the nation being baptised in blood invoke some of the disturbing images of the pre-fascist romantics such as Heinrich von Treitschke of nineteenth century Europe.

As a liberal and a democrat I prefer to see war is a necessary evil rather than as a cleansing or liberating sacrifice. A more cohesive Australia *did* emerge from the Great War. But the actions of men and women alike on the home front as well on the battlefield affected that seismic shift in the nature of our federation and society. The assertiveness of Prime Minister William Morris Hughes at the Versailles Peace Conference would have been unimaginable in 1914.

However, the enduring strength of ANZAC day is in its veneration of universal values – a willingness to make a personal sacrifice for the common good, compassion and a sense of duty. In this way ANZAC Day has continued to renew itself and maintain its vitality despite the passing into memory of all the veterans of the Great War.

Some are sceptical of the relevance of this day. Cynics classify the Gallipoli campaign as strategic folly which ended in defeat. Others say that with the exception of the fighting in New Guinea in 1941 and 1942 our soldiers, sailors and airmen have died in "other peoples' wars." Thankfully, ANZAC Day needs no defence from me. In passing though I would say that while I respect such views I consider them misguided.

It was the eminent Australian historian Geoffrey Blainey who coined the term "The Tyranny of Distance." However, our distance from Europe in 1914 did not provide us with a reprieve from the march of history. It is fanciful to imagine that Australia could have remained neutral in the Great War. Even in that era we were enmeshed in a complex global system reliant on the naval power of Great Britain for its equilibrium.

Of 416,809 men who enlisted during World War One thirty four per cent had been born in Britain. It was inconceivable that Australia could sit idly by and watch the German Empire dominate Europe and thence the global system. To believe otherwise is to succumb to the tyranny of the present and impose our values on another generation. Indeed our first military operations involved a naval raid on the German communications facility in New Guinea just weeks after the war began. Australia's interests *were* engaged in this struggle for global supremacy.

The same can be said of every war ever since 1918. Australia has always sought to support the dominant liberal democratic power in the maintenance of a global order conducive to free societies and free markets. In conceding that such hard headed strategic calculus has underpinned every military commitment that we have undertaken, we are in no way detracting from the

noble motives of those who have paid the supreme sacrifice in all our wars. Nor, does our observance of this day in any way glorify war.

I believe our young people intuitively grasp this. The growing numbers of pilgrims to Gallipoli and more recently the battlefields of the Western Front and Kokoda bear testament to this. Our kids are idealistic – just like Joe and Oliver Cumberland before them. And there is something of the naïveté and optimism of the ANZACs in the waves of young Australians who mark their right of passage into adulthood by travelling overseas.

Likewise our icons and monuments reveal deep insights into the way Australians view war and sacrifice. The historian Ken Inglis drew attention to the proliferation of small statues and monuments commemorating the dead of the Great War throughout the small towns and regional cities of Australia.

The prevalent image is that of digger resting on arms reversed. They are sombre rather than triumphant. In many cases they look vulnerable – even smaller than life. There is something ineffably sad about these lonely figures atop the roll of the names of young men who never returned to their homes. The repatriation of the bodies of our fallen is a relatively recent phenomenon. Thousands of young Australians lie in cemeteries throughout Europe, North Africa, the Middle East and New Guinea and of course at Gallipoli. Those small town monuments capture the paradox of ANZAC Day – the heart of a nation swelling with pride while bursting with grief.

And outside our national war memorial in Canberra just two soldiers stand in silent vigil. John Simpson Kirkpatrick –the fabled Man with The Donkey – and Edward Weary Dunlop. Weary was a Doctor and Simpson a medic. Indeed, Weary Dunlop was also a prisoner of war, not an invincible warrior. Each of these men is revered for saving rather than taking lives; for stoicism rather than reckless bravery. Even in bronze the wrinkled kindness of Weary's eyes is evident. Even his statue has healer's hands.

Those statues reassure me that Australians look beyond any controversy over the values for which men fought to the values they displayed in commemorating ANZAC Day. And in an era characterised by rampant consumerism, ephemeral celebrity and overnight ‘heroes’ I believe that we are justifiably awed in recalling the unselfish sacrifice of thousands of young Australia soldiers, sailors airmen and nurses –men and women alike who have died in the service of this country.

In closing where I began, Lincoln expressed it most eloquently when referring to the dead of Gettysburg: “[They] gave their lives that the nation might live.”

Lest We Forget.