

# Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn

- **Fred Cullen \***
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AUSTRALIAN SOLDIERS PICTURED DURING A BAYONET CHARGE AT GALLIPOLI, ARRANGED BY AN ARMY PHOTOGRAPHER. PICTURE: NATIONAL WAR MEMORIAL. SUPPLIED

**THE Anzac spirit is elusive of description, but it has been part of Australian thought, language and life for almost a century.**

It was a legend that gripped the imagination and endures forever as part of our history.

Sir William Deane - former Governor-General of Australia - summed it up this way: "Though born from the doomed campaign at Gallipoli, the spirit of Anzac is not really about loss at all.

"It is about courage and endurance, and duty and love of country, and mateship, and good humour and the survival of a sense of self-worth and decency in the face of dreadful odds."

For younger generations, and those who lived here for just a short while, it is sometimes difficult to understand why it is with gratitude and reverence that we continue to commemorate Anzac Day.

The overwhelming majority of younger generations of Australians have never had to risk their lives to defend the freedom, peace, security, privileges and benefits of living in this country, nor chance their loved ones to the dangers of war.

But to older generations of Australians, the memories of war and its dire consequences remain vivid, and so we honour those whose personal sacrifice, dedication, loyalty and hardship forged and defended and preserved the Australian way of life - so often at the cost of their own lives.

If we pause just once a year on this image and reflect on these things, we may begin to understand the depth of feeling arising from memories of lives willingly offered up in the defence of Australia, its ideals and its values - the most significant and most tragic contribution any citizen can make to the nation.

In serving our nation, those people sacrificed so much: all personal blessings - family, security, comfort, future - to confront dangers that threatened their community, or to help people of other countries unable to defend themselves from tyranny and oppression.

We honour their spirit and their service - the putting aside of their differences to support one another in extreme adversity in the pursuit of a just and noble cause: those simple, comradely gestures that flow from the deepest springs of our national character.

Anzac is not only a proud chapter in our history and part of the national heritage of every Australian, it also expresses ideals of service and sacrifice and a faith in the possibility of a better world order.

Perhaps it is only from the relative safety of our time we can fully comprehend the scale of what was won and lost in the hard-fought battles of the Gallipoli campaign.

We lost a campaign with 26,000 casualties, but it had won for us an enduring sense of national ethos based on those iconic traits of mateship, courage and compassion.

In life, often our failures can be our greatest successes.

On Anzac Day, we are summoned to recall the battle sacrifices of Australians from all walks of life to commemorate courage and strength of character in the face of incredible and sustained adversity.

But in losing a campaign they won us a greater prize - an enduring sense of national identity.

\* Digger Fred Cullen, OAM, is president of the Ivanhoe RSL