

ANZAC ADDRESS 2019
SUZANNE PEKIN
PRINCIPAL DALKEITH PRIMARY SCHOOL

Good morning distinguished guests, parents, community members, staff and students. Welcome to our 2019 ANZAC ceremony, held, as always, in this wonderful setting which is our school.

This morning I want to talk about something quite amazing that happened in 1915 and which I believe has a message for us here today in light of terrorism attacks that take place almost daily in places such as Syria, Afghanistan, Somalia and more recently and closer to home, the horror that took place in Christchurch.

When people talk about the history of Gallipoli, they don't talk much about this one day – the day when the fighting stopped.

Australian soldiers landed at Gallipoli on 25 April 1915. They quickly established a hold on the slopes of the hills near the beach. Nearly a month later, in May, a heavy Turkish counter attack led to many deaths.

On the 24th of May 1915 a pause in the fighting was negotiated by both sides so they could bury the dead. The brief truce became well known among the Australians for the way both sides – Turkish and Australians, exchanged photographs and cigarettes as they dug the graves.

The Australian war correspondent, C. W. Bean, wrote that "*The fate of many missing men was now cleared up for the first time. The task of both armies was a most arduous and difficult one, and full of the horrors of war.*"

One Western Australian soldier who was there at the time was Albert Facey, a man who grew up around the Narrogin area.

He wrote a book called "*A Fortunate Life*"

He reflected on that day back in 1915.

He said, *“The whole operation was a strange experience -- here we were, mixing with our enemies, exchanging smiles and cigarettes, when the day before we had been tearing each other to pieces ... Away to our left there were high table-topped hills and on these there were what looked like thousands of people. (They were) Turkish civilians (who) had taken advantage of the cease-fire to come out and watch the burial.”*

Now here is the thing - One of the things that struck the Australians was how well they got on with the Turkish soldiers. The Australians were usually given ration biscuits to eat, which they hated because they were hard and they tasted terrible. The Turks, though, had brown bread, and the Australians traded almost anything they could so they could get some fresh brown bread.

That truce was scheduled to finish at 4.30 on that day. By 4.00 o'clock, all of the soldiers were back in their trenches, and for the next half an hour a deathly silence fell across the battlefield.

At exactly 4.30 the firing and the fighting started again.

What I find remarkable about this story are the myths that had been spread on both sides about the enemy.

The Australian press described the Turkish soldiers as 'ignorant', and the Turkish described Australians as 'wild cannibals'.

None of the myths, of course, were true. In the end, when people meet each other, they soon learn that the most important thing about them is their shared humanity.

Far too often beliefs are born because of misconceptions and untruths.

The war began because leaders on both sides talked up attitudes of hate and fear. Audrey Herbert was an interpreter with the Australian forces. He later went on to become a Member of the British parliament.

He said, "*I talked to one of the Turks, who pointed to the graves. 'That's politics.' He pointed to the dead bodies and said, 'That's diplomacy. God pity us poor soldiers'.*"

What that Turkish soldier was trying to say was that ordinary people are the ones who are affected by the propoganda of hate and division. But once we leave this behind, we begin to become friends.

And this is where there is a message for us here today.

Underneath our skin, we are all essentially human and all essentially the same. But at the same time, we are also individual, unique and different.

We achieve peace when we recognise and value our shared humanity, but also respect and accept our individual differences.

The greatest appreciation that we can give on ANZAC Day is to recognise the sacrifices of the fallen, and work hard together to achieve some sort of harmony and balance in the world.

Hatred and intolerance do not have any place in our lives, and it is going to take all of us to work together to create a peaceful world that is good, and whole, for our young people.

The path to peace begins here, with us, and it needs to begin now.

Thank you.