

Speech by Mayor Logan K Howlett, JP
City of Cockburn RSL ANZAC Youth Parade and Service
RSL Park & 'Field of Poppies'
Spearwood Avenue, Spearwood
Thursday, 11 April, 2019

Good morning one and all.

Across Australia and around the world on ANZAC Day thousands of people gather to pay their respects to our ANZACS and all who have followed in their footsteps.

The concept for the City of Cockburn RSL ANZAC Youth Parade and Service was initiated by Mr Arthur Stanton, RSL of Australia Life Member in 2001.

Arthur, thank you for your foresight and the on-going contribution you make alongside other veterans to the success of this annual event and other commemorative services throughout the year.

The City of Cockburn RSL ANZAC Youth Parade and Service provides the opportunity for students, teachers and principals from across the Fremantle Education District to join veterans, council members and staff of the City of Cockburn and the community to reflect on the ANZAC spirit that is alive and well and that continues to grow in stature and importance year on year.

Australians eagerly went to war in 1914, anxious to prove their loyalty and worth to the British Empire.

By wars end in 1918, Australia's all volunteer army - the 'Diggers' - had fought at Gallipoli, in the Middle East, and had endured the Western Front in France, where they suffered the highest per capita casualties in the British Empire.

It was during this period that the legendary ANZAC spirit was forged by the extraordinary actions of our defence service men and women and those of New Zealand.

Australia emerged from World War I weakened by its terrible losses, but strengthened by a sense of nation hood.

Young men away at war supported by their families and communities back home who kept the home fires burning.

Today as we gather to commemorate our Anzacs and all the service men and

women who have followed in their footsteps I ask that you also remember those who kept the home fires burning.

They were the men manpowered to keep the production of food, equipment and other essentials flowing to the frontline throughout the first and second world wars.

They were the women who worked the farms, who replaced the men in our factories, who drove the trucks, prepared parcels for the 'boys', raised the children and who kept in touch with letters and parcels to their loved ones on the battlefronts.

They were the women who formed the Women's Land Army in 1942, later to be known as the Australian Women's Land Army.

Disbanded on 31 December 1945 it took 52 years before they were to be formally recognised and to become eligible for the Civilian Service Medal.

They were the doctors and nurses and the volunteers who tended to the wounded on their return and those requiring quarantining having contracted crippling and sometimes deadly diseases.

Together, they were the ones who kept the home fires burning.

They helped lay the foundation for victory from a distance giving hope and inspiration to their fathers, uncles, brothers, husbands, friends and sweethearts fighting in far distant lands.

Occasionally the home fires were sparked by an unexpected gift from the home front - something to hold, something to treasure.

Mrs Adelaide White was one person who received such a gift from her son, Sydney Fox White.

It arrived at the front door of their home - delivered by the local postman.

It wasn't long after that, at the same front door that they received the tragic news of his death.

Sydney had died of the effects of gas poisoning on 22 October 1917.

The family funeral notice read:

"Not one he loved was by his side
To hear his last faint sigh
Or whisper one loving word

Before he closed his eyes"

Something to hold, something to treasure - that gift is still in our family today – a silver chain link belt delicately engraved and sent to his Mother before he entered the war zone in France in 1916 - he survived for just 16 months from his enlistment date.

That silver belt has been passed down through the generations and my wife Patricia has it now - a poignant reminder of war – of how the home fires are kept burning and the creation of treasured memory of times past – of a life lost.

Many such treasured gifts were received and continue to be received from loved ones in war and peacekeeping zones.

These gifts are a poignant reminder of war,
its impact on families;
on communities;
on nations; and importantly
on how we can continue to work together to keep the home fires burning.

In closing, I leave you with a quote from the historian of the ANZAC legend, the renowned Charles Bean, he said:

"Their story will stand ...
it rises, as it will always rise,
above the mist of ages,
a monument to great hearted men,
and,
for their nation, a possession forever."

Lest we forget!