

**EMU PARK REMEMBRANCE DAY 2019**  
**KEY NOTE SPEECH**  
**MONDAY 11 NOVEMBER 2019**

Good morning veterans, ex- servicemen and women, ladies and gentlemen, and boys and girls. It is an honor and privilege to be here this morning and I thank the President of the Emu Park RSL, Darryl Dwyer, and the members, for inviting me to give this address on the Centenary of the 1<sup>st</sup> Armistice Day services held in 1919.

I would like to acknowledge the following people who are here with us today:

1. The Federal Member for Capricornia, Michelle Landry MHR.
2. The State Member for Keppel, Britany Lauga MLA.
3. The Mayor of the Livingstone Shire Council, Bill Ludwig.
4. The Deputy President of the RSL Pioneer-Fitzroy-Highlands District, Phil Luzzi.

Today, at 11am, we will mark one hundred and one years since the 11 November 1918, when the guns on the Western Front fell silent and an armistice brought an end to World War 1. Nations celebrated the return of peace to the world after four years of hostility and destruction.

The 11<sup>th</sup> hour of the 11<sup>th</sup> day of the 11<sup>th</sup> month took on a special significance in the post-World War 1 years. The moment when hostilities ceased on the Western Front became universally associated with the remembrance of those who had died in the war. This first modern world conflict had brought about the mobilisation of over 70 million people and left between 9 and 11 million people dead. The allied nations chose this day and time for the commemoration of their war losses.

On the first anniversary of the armistice in 1919, then called Armistice Day, two minutes silence was instituted as part of the main commemorative ceremony at the new Cenotaph in London. The silence was proposed by Australian journalist Edward Honey, who was working in Fleet Street in London. At about the same time, King George V personally requested all the people of the British Empire to suspend normal activities for two minutes on the hour of the armistice. The two minutes silence was popularly adopted and it became a central feature of future commemorations on Armistice Day.

On the second anniversary of the armistice in 1920, the commemoration was given added significance when it became a funeral, with the return of the remains of an unknown soldier from the battlefields of the Western Front. Unknown soldiers were interred with full military honors in Westminster Abbey in London and at the Arc de Triumph in Paris.

Following World War II, the British and Australian Governments changed the name “Armistice Day” to “Remembrance Day”.

In Australia in 1993, on the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the armistice, Remembrance Day ceremonies again became the focus of national attention. The remains of an unknown Australian soldier, exhumed from a First World War military cemetery in France, was ceremoniously entombed in the Australian War Memorial’s Hall of Memory.

Remembrance Day ceremonies were conducted simultaneously in towns and cities all over the country, culminating at the moment of burial at 11am and coinciding with the traditional two minutes’ silence. This ceremony touched a chord across the Australian nation and re-established Remembrance Day as a significant day of commemoration.

Four years later, in 1997, Governor- General Sir William Deane issued a proclamation formally declaring the 11<sup>th</sup> of November to be Remembrance Day, and urging all Australians to observe one minute’s silence at 11am on that day to remember those who died or suffered for Australia’s cause in all wars and armed conflicts.

Last year, on the 100 year anniversary of the armistice, commemoration ceremonies were held all around Australia. The RSL Pioneer-Fitzroy-Highlands District held an Armistice Commemorative Dinner in Mackay which was attended by representatives from all the RSL Sub-Branches in the District including the Emu Park Sub-Branch.

Australians have been involved in wars and conflicts since the New Zealand Maori wars of 1860-61 and still have troops deployed around the world in peace keeping actions.

Australia's casualty statistics to the present day are truly staggering in their enormity - over 102 thousand killed in action and around 225 thousand wounded or taken prisoner. Over 100 of the dead were nurses. Around 98 percent (100 thousand) lost their lives in the Great War of 1914-18 and the 2<sup>nd</sup> World War 1939-45.

During this service, let us acknowledge that the price of our freedom in this country today is underwritten by the sacrifices of our war casualties.

The minute silence we observe at 11am today is dedicated to all servicemen and women who gave their lives for our country in times of war and all those who returned and have since passed on.

During the 1<sup>st</sup> World War, Australia only had a population of around 4.8million people and many of these casualties were suffered during this war:

1. 417,000 Australian men enlisted amounting to half the eligible male population of the country.
2. Over 330,000 of them embarked for overseas service.
3. Almost two-thirds of these men became casualties.
4. The Australian Imperial Force(AIF) had the highest proportion of battle casualties of all the forces of the British Empire.
5. Around 61,000, or 1 man in five who served abroad, died on active service.
6. Of the 264,000 who returned, more than half had suffered through their wounds, both physically and emotionally.

The casualties from World War 1 was a tragedy and is also one of the most unimaginable loses to the Australian nation.

Families and communities grieved following the loss of so many men, and women increasingly assumed the physical and financial burden of bringing their sons and daughters up in single parent families. These mothers had to face the hardships of the Great Depression, only to find that their sons and daughters would find themselves fighting in a Second Word War, barely 20 years after they lost their husbands in the first.

Bill Gammage compellingly captured the aftermath of this war and I quote:

“Dreams abandoned,  
lives without purpose,  
women without husbands,  
families without family life,  
one long funeral for a generation and more after 1918”  
unquote.

It is only when we try to comprehend our war casualty figures, especially those from the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> World Wars, that we begin to understand the endless crop of war memorials that sprang up in all towns and cities throughout Australia, and why we commemorate Remembrance Day each year.

But casualty numbers alone cannot adequately chronicle this nation's sacrifice. As each of the fallen had a family and friends whose lives were enriched by their love and diminished by their loss. Each added to the life of a city, a suburb or a country town like Emu Park. Each worked before enlistment, as a teacher, a farmer, a laborer, a nurse, a doctor, a clerk, or any one of the countless occupations which added to the prosperity and the richness of this nation. These men and women were denied the full span of human existence, and this nation needs to acknowledge and remember their contribution in life and their sacrifice in death. This is done on ANZAC Day and Remembrance Day each year.

It is part of the RSL charter that we ensure that this country never forgets the sacrifices that were made by previous and present generations in times of war. These young men and women went off to fight in foreign lands, and many rest there today, to ensure that we continue to live in a free and just society and in the manner we are accustomed.

These brave young men and women, most now strangers from another time, gave us a legacy from the past on which to build a future for our nation.

Thank You