

Speech by Mayor Logan K Howlett, JP
ANZAC Day Dawn Service 2019
Hamilton Hill Memorial
Cnr. Carrington Street & Rockingham Road
Hamilton Hill

Distinguished guests, Veterans, the Serving Men and Women of the Australian Defence Force, Ladies and Gentlemen, girls and boys.

April, 2019, marks the Centenary of Repatriation in Australia, yes the Centenary of Repatriation!

It has been given very little, if any publicity in our media, yet it marks a significant milestone in Australian military history.

In 1919, the Australian government established the Repatriation Department to oversee the task of bringing home tens of thousands of soldiers and nurses after the First World War.

It was to ensure that those returning men and women who had been involved in the war to end all wars, would not only be welcomed home but repatriated into their communities under the guidance of the Repatriation Department.

It is a role that is now undertaken by the Department of Veterans' Affairs.

So what was it like way back in 1919?

Returning men and women and Australians in general had been shaken by the true realities of war.

Many of those exposed to the battlefields had seen their mates taken for all time. It was a horrific war that seemed to have no end for our soldiers, airmen, navy personnel and our nurses.

Casualties mounted by the day, unheard of numbers falling in a far distant land, fighting for King & country.

At wars end, thousands of Australian troops marched triumphantly through the streets of London, taking a salute from the Prince of Wales.

It wasn't long before those same service men and women were on troop carriers heading home where they marched down the streets of capital cities and small towns to a hero's welcome.

Such were the celebrations at wars end involving ticker tape parades, music and songs that had connected those on the battlefields to their families at home - uniting people in their beliefs, and inspiring those who had left home and family to fight that for a brief moment, time stood still.

It was songs such as 'It's a Long Way to Tipperary', 'Over There', 'The Long, Long Trail a Winding', and 'Keep the Home Fires Burning' to name a few of the most popular had inspired one and all during those long years where the war had prevailed.

While these songs united communities it was the repatriation of those returning home that held the spotlight.

In Western Australia, Lemnos Hospital in Shenton Park where its architectural design and surrounding landscaped gardens consisting mainly of Aleppo Pine trees provided the highest standards of care for our returning soldiers who were suffering from mental health related matters and shell shock.

Similarly, Sunset Hospital previously known as Claremont's Old Men's Home, in Dalkeith provided a home for many a returning service man in their later lives, its buildings designed along the lines of military architecture with spacious gardens and unsurpassed views of the Swan River.

Hollywood Repatriation Hospital, now known as Hollywood Private Hospital was built in 1941 ostensibly as a place to care for service men and women – it was originally known as a military hospital.

In 1947 it became known as the 'Repatriation General Hospital, Hollywood and came under the then Repatriation Commission providing medical services for veterans and war widows.

Today, Hollywood Private Hospital continues to honour its special connection with veterans with all wards and units having been renamed after Western Australians who were awarded the Victoria Cross and George Cross medals of honour.

It also provides a continuing medical service to many veterans and war widows.

However, returning service men and women also went home to be cared for by family, while others entered facilities in country towns and a few made their way to places like the Banskia woodlands and wetlands in the Perth Metropolitan area to live out their remaining days.

The peace and tranquillity of these localities meant they could escape from the 'noise' of every-day life, particularly those who were suffering from shell shock.

As we commemorate the Centenary of Repatriation in Australia the challenge for the Department of Veterans Affairs and the entire community is;

- how do we 'step up' as a nation to more fully support our veterans –
- what can we do to honour their contribution to world peace – to the protection of our nation and that of communities in far distant lands –
- how do we continue to acknowledge the ANZAC legacy they have created and enhanced over the last hundred years plus; and importantly,
- how will we support our veterans and serving men and women of the Australian Defence Force going forward?

In closing, no matter where military battles are fought the ANZAC spirit remains as strong as it ever was – courage, endurance and mateship reflected in the actions of those brave men and women of Australia and New Zealand held in our hearts and minds forever more; forever more.

Lest we forget!