

Speech – Remembrance Day 11 November 2015

Delivered by

Deputy Mayor Carol Reeve-Fowkes

City of Cockburn

Good Morning

Distinguished guests, veterans, the serving men and women of the Australian Defence Force, ladies and gentlemen.

In the year we commemorate the Centenary of ANZAC it is fitting that we reflect on how Remembrance Day came into being and the need to keep the home fires burning while the serving men and women of the Australian Defence Force and our Peace Keeping Forces do their utmost to follow in the footsteps of our Veterans.

Remembrance Day (also known as Poppy Day) is a memorial day that has been observed in Commonwealth Nations since the end of the First World War in memory of the members of the armed forces who died in the line of duty.

War remembrances are also conducted in non-Commonwealth countries on the same day and have since 1919.

Hostilities formally ended "at the 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month", in accordance with the armistice signed by representatives of Germany and the Entente (Russia, France and the United Kingdom).

The First World War officially ended with the signing of the Treaty of Versailles on 28 June 1919.

The remembrance memorial evolved out of Armistice Day which continues to be marked on the same date around the world.

The initial Armistice Day was observed at Buckingham Palace commencing with King George V hosting a "Banquet in Honour of the President of the French Republic during the evening hours of 10 November 1919.

The first official Armistice Day was subsequently held on the grounds of Buckingham Palace the following morning.

The red remembrance poppy has become a familiar emblem of Remembrance Day due to the poem "In Flanders Fields".

These poppies bloomed across some of the worst battlefields of Flanders in World War I; their brilliant red colour became a symbol for the blood spilled in the war.

From the fields of Belgium and France and elsewhere across Europe where the poppies have swayed with the soft breezes for time immemorial we know of their fragility, their burst of red when in full bloom, albeit for a short time, their colour dominating the landscape.

And as their petals begin to separate and drift on the wind, their stems dry and time passes their seeds burst forth signalling a new start – it is a cycle that ensures life forever more for those blood red poppies.

Our Aussie and New Zealand boys were also in full bloom as they arrived at those battlefields 100 years ago. Like the poppies, their blooms lasted all but a short time before they fell to the hail of bullets and bombs and their bodies were as one with the soil where they fell.

For them there would never be a new start - the opportunity had been taken forever.

Perhaps that's why the red poppies have captured our hearts and minds, why wherever they grow we stop and admire them – just long enough before their petals start to drift on the breeze and a new life cycle begins.

And as the flags flutter, our hearts pound within and we take that deep breathe to compose ourselves and a tear or two escapes - we know that our boys are at rest – forever in our hearts and minds.

Forever in our hearts and minds.

Lest we Forget.