

Speech by Mayor Logan K Howlett, JP

Korean War Veterans Memorial Service

City of Cockburn RSL Sub-Branch

Thursday, 27 July 2023

Distinguished guests, Veterans, the Serving men and women of the Australian Defence Force, ladies and gentlemen and our young man Brady.

As we gather here today on a cold and somewhat bleak winter's day to commemorate those who lost their lives in the Korean War and to acknowledge those who returned to our shores in a war that has had no end – no formal recognition that the war has ended – we can all but wonder why?

On this day in 2012, the first service to be held within the City of Cockburn to commemorate those who made the ultimate sacrifice during the Korean War occurred.

Sometimes it seems like it was just yesterday.

Today, the unveiling of the Korean War Memorial in Kings Park is occurring at this very moment.

The County of Gapyeong in South Korea donated the 10-tonne stone and plinth for the memorial – a stone mined from the area where a crucial battle took place in 1951.

Perhaps now the title of 'the forgotten war' can be finally be put to rest for only today; 70 years on, is a memorial with the wording; 'Lest We Forget' – 'We are forever grateful for your sacrifice' being officially unveiled in Perth.

Yes, it was the 27 July 1953 when an armistice was finally agreed.

It (the memorial) closes a chapter in the memorials established throughout Kings Park to our fallen, and those wounded, and others who returned to our shores following the armistice.

The article in The West Australian newspaper yesterday, titled 'Time to Remember the Forgotten War' personified all that occurred during the war and since the armistice was signed.

Korean War veteran Bill Ritchie featured alongside the memorial - a poignant reminder of times past and the expectations of the future.

They say a picture is worth a thousand words – Bill Ritchie's photograph certainly hit that point as did his quote that probably sums up the thoughts of many – 'Like all wars it should not have happened'.

Given the passage of time our Korean veteran numbers have declined. The trauma of war, illness and age have all taken their toll.

Today, we see those who continue to carry the flag for their mates who they fought alongside, who stand tall and proud, and who alone know the real cost of war on themselves, their families and their communities.

Their stories continue to be told to young and old, to family, to friends and for some, in journals and other publications.

Their hearts reflect the ANZAC spirit for they alone know the feeling of enrolling to serve their country.

They know of the dreams and aspirations of those who step up to serve their country.

They know that those young men and women will one day be amongst those who will be affectionately known as 'Veterans'.

For those who have gone before them they leave a legacy of mateship, courage, sacrifice and gallantry that we can all aspire too in our daily lives, our contribution to the community and to building our national pride.

That is why the ANZAC spirit is alive and well and burns within all that serve our great country in both war and peace keeping zones.

To our Koreans Veterans here today we owe you and your families a depth of gratitude that we could never hope to repay – let it be known that our presence here today is a mark of respect to you for the service you have given to Australia and its people.

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!