

Speech by Mayor Logan K Howlett, JP City of Cockburn

Korean War Veterans Memorial Service

RSL Sub Branch Headquarters, Hamilton Hill - 27 July, 2021

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

It was on this day in 2012 that we stood at the War Memorial in Hamilton Hill for the first time to commemorate the Korean War as a RSL Sub-Branch.

While the weather then was somewhat kinder than today, our hearts and minds were focused on the inaugural ceremony as we commemorated those who made the ultimate sacrifice; and to acknowledge and thank those who returned to our shores after serving their country.

Since the end of the Korean War, we have seen our veteran numbers dwindle as the traumas of war, illness and age take their toll.

We owe our Koreans Veterans and their 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 them for the service they have given to Australia and its people.

Importantly, they gave a nation of people hope in their hour of need while fighting alongside other United Nations forces in the hope of bringing peace to the Korean peninsula.

Peace has at best been tenuous.

We all know that over 70 years on that the Korean Peninsula remains to this day a powder keg just waiting to explode.

The posturing of the North Korean Leader, Kim Jong-Un continues to destabilise the region and inflict on-going uncertainty to millions of people.

The majority of us cannot know or understand the impact on communities over what is now several generations.

Children, teenagers, young adults through to those who have experienced the trauma of war and the uncertainty that it brings dating back to 1950 must at times think that they live in a surreal world.

The sanctions imposed by many countries has not dimmed the threat of war nor forced the North Korean leadership over many years to reflect on the abject poverty inflicted on their own people as they pursue the goal of becoming a nuclear inspired nation.

The stories of the North Korean people exposed to this daily heartache are rarely told, or allowed to be told – perhaps in time we'll hear about them, although like the atrocities of most wars, we may never know the true extent of their suffering.

I encourage all Korean War veterans to continue to tell their stories of the war that impacted on their lives and that of their family and friends; and the community that they live in.

Our Korean Veterans, those who have gone before them, and those who have followed in their footsteps have left 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.

If the growing tide of people coming out to commemorate services such as today's throughout Australia and other parts of the world is any indication, our serving men and women have nothing to fear.

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

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!