

## **ANZAC DAY 2025 SPEECH – MAYOR OF STRATHFIELD**

Thank you Matt, and good morning all,

Today, we gather to mark an important occasion in our national calendar—ANZAC Day. I'd like to begin by acknowledging the presence of our distinguished guests, including our Federal and State representatives who are here and to the members and leaders of our local community groups, schools, and service organisations. Welcome.

A special thank you to our Guest of Honour today, Wing Commander Paul Hughes JP.

Open behalf of Strathfield Council, its staff, and its elected Councillors - thank you all for being here.

I am joined today but my fellow council members Councillors Sandy Reddy, Rory Nosworthy, Esther Kim, Karen Pensabene, Matthew Blackmore and the Deputy Mayor Cr Benjamin Cai.

ANZAC Day is a time to pause and reflect on the service and sacrifice of more than 1.5 million Australians who have served our country in wars, conflicts, and peacekeeping missions over the past century.

As Australians, we honour the legacy of the over 100,000 who have given their lives in conflict because they made their sacrifices not only with courage, but with a deep sense of duty to our nation and to values greater than themselves. Those soldiers who stood firm for freedom, for peace, and for each other – they served and they died for you and I.

Their sacrifice shaped the course of history and safeguarded the liberty of generations to come. In commemorating their service, we not only remember their bravery—we reaffirm our enduring commitment to the principles they died defending. Their memory lives on in our hearts, in our communities, and in the free and peaceful lives we are privileged to lead today.

It is one thing to speak of courage and conviction. It is another to recall the very moments in which those ideals were truly tested. Across different eras, in vastly different theatres of war, Australian service members have embodied the spirit of ANZAC in ways that continue to inspire and instruct us.

In this greeting, I thought would take a moment to reflect, with you, on two particular battles which speak so powerfully to the courage and resolve of young Australian soldiers—

The first of these is the Battle of Long Tan. It was 1966, and took place in the thick of the Vietnam War. Just 108 Australians found themselves pinned down in a rubber plantation, outnumbered by more than twenty to one. The rain fell hard. The ground turned to mud. Ammunition was running low. And yet, in those terrifying hours, what shone through was mateship, discipline, and an unshakable determination not to yield. Reinforcements arrived just in time, and through sheer courage and grit, they held the line. These were young men—sons, brothers, tradesmen, farmhands—suddenly leaders in the face of chaos. Those 108 Australian men fought off over 2000 opposing troops.

I share this not to glorify war, but to remind us that ANZAC Day honours these kinds of moments—the ordinary Australians who, when tested, showed extraordinary bravery.

And to the second example of these values in action – let us remember the Dardanelles Campaign, where Gallipoli is. Today we commemorate the 110th anniversary of the Gallipoli landings—an event that holds great historical and national significance. And so we must return, as we always do on this day, to Gallipoli. It was there, in 1915, that the ANZAC legend was born. In a foreign land, on steep cliffs and in hostile terrain, young Australians—many barely more than boys—faced unrelenting fire, disease, and unimaginable hardship. What emerged in the chaos was not only courage, but a spirit of ingenuity, humour, and fierce loyalty. They fought not for conquest, but for their mates beside them, and for a belief that a free people should stand firm in the face of tyranny.

And so, from the beaches of Anzac Cove to the muddy fields of Long Tan, from Gallipoli's trenches to modern peacekeeping missions, we see one unbroken thread: the unwavering strength of Australian values— **Courage, Endurance, Sacrifice, Mateship**, and also hope - even in the darkest of hours.

As we gather in remembrance, let's not forget that ANZAC Day is not only a tribute to those who served—it is also a reminder of what they fought for: a peaceful and just world.

In honouring their legacy, we are called to be peacemakers in our own time—to build communities grounded in understanding, resilience, and compassion. Let us remember that their sacrifice was not for war itself, but

for the peace that must follow, and for the peace and privileges we have today.

I thank everyone who has joined us here this morning and I am proud to welcome you back to this wonderful annual liturgy.

In closing, let us carry forward the legacy of those we honour today—not only through ceremony, but in how we live, how we serve, and how we remember. Their story is now part of our national story, and it is our responsibility to keep their stories alive.

Lest we forget.

<< END of Mayor's Anzac Day Welcome Speech >>

<< START of Mayor's Poetry and Artwork Winner Intro >>

Every year, we like to invite students from schools across Strathfield to submit a poem for consideration and to be read out here today.

Council has been committed to strengthening community participation in the Strathfield ANZAC Day Memorial Service and I am so delighted to see a growing number of students involved each year.

I would like to take a moment to thank every student who participated, it wasn't an easy decision to pick a winner as I thoroughly enjoyed reading each and every poem, but .....

Please help me in congratulating **Vincent Yu** from St Patrick's College who was awarded 1<sup>st</sup> place!

<< pause for applause >>

Now, I'd like to invite Vincent to the stage to recite his winning poem.

<< Vincent recites poem >>

Thank you so much, Vincent.

This year we also introduced an ANZAC Day art competition and again have been blown away and delighted by the volume of submissions.

This was also a very hard task but I would like to congratulate **Evanna Lui** from Santa Sabina College, please give her a round of applause.

I'd now like to invite Evanna to the stage to collect her award.

<< END of Mayor's Poetry and Artwork Winner Intro >>

<< START of Conclusion speech by Mayor >>

Thank you, Father John. I must say your words resonate more profoundly now since the news of the passing of the late Pope, Pope Francis on Easter Monday.

May he rest in peace.

In a few moments, the Strathfield Rotary Club and the Lion's Club of Lugarno will be ready to serve a delicious sausage sizzle and drink for everyone here today so make sure to grab a bite to eat before you leave!

Lastly, before we wrap up, I want to say one last thank you to you all for taking the time out of your day to join us in remembering our Anzac's.

I urge us all to reflect on their loss and pay gratitude to their sacrifices now and forever more.

And a final thank you to Cumberland RSL sub-Branch President Mr Matthew Jones, for hosting today's event in collaboration with Strathfield Council and making this beautiful ceremony possible.

Thank you.

<< END of Event >>