




Speech By
Hon. Anastacia Palaszczuk

MEMBER FOR INALA

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WORLD WAR I, 100-YEAR COMMEMORATION

 **Hon. A PALASZCZUK** (Inala—ALP) (Leader of the Opposition) (9.41 am): I join the Premier in recognising the significance of this day in the history of our state, our nation and the world. One hundred years ago, half a world away, the die was cast for one of the most horrific periods in world history. The First World War, as we know it to be today, would wipe out a generation of young men and sow the seeds for an even more devastating conflict two decades later.

For a young nation like Australia, dutifully bound to the British Empire, its impacts would be profound. Ours was a youthful nation, forging its own identity as a federation, when the war came calling. It would demand from us our strongest young men, asked to fight in foreign lands, while families back home would rally together in the face of fear and uncertainty. One hundred years on it would be easy to ask why a country like Australia would participate in a largely European conflict.

As the *Hansard* read by the Premier has indicated, in 1914 the answer was simple. When Britain called Australia would answer; and answer we did. More than 400,000 Australians would volunteer to fight this war, including more than 57,000 Queenslanders. To put those numbers in context, Queensland's contribution equated to about 8½ per cent of our state's population at the time and nearly 38 per cent of all men aged between 18 and 44. Around 280 Queensland women are believed to have volunteered as nurses. It was a volunteer army that would be sent to fight against the might of the German machine and the tenacity of the Turkish defender.

Among those volunteers would be the 9th Battalion, the Royal Queensland Regiment. One of the first battalions to be raised, the 9th was raised at Enoggera and made up entirely of Queensland volunteers. As the Premier stated, it was among the first ashore at Gallipoli on 25 April 1915, and would further distinguish itself on the Western Front, including playing a role in the great allied offensive of 1918. It would serve with distinction until armistice was reached.

The 9th Battalion's black and blue colour patch would become a badge of honour for those who served. It would also be seen on the streets of Brisbane, with the wives and girlfriends of those brave soldiers wearing miniature colour patches with pride.

From the shores of Gallipoli to the fields of Belgium and western France, not to mention the deserts of the Middle East, Queensland and Australian soldiers would fulfil their duty with honour and valour. But this would be a war defined not so much by the glory of victory but by sacrifice. Around 10,000 Queenslanders, among 60,000 total Australians, would never come home. At around 65 per cent, Australia's casualty rate was amongst the highest of any nation.

Amongst those Queenslanders were at least two nurses—Norma Mowbray from St George and Rosa O'Kane from Charters Towers. In an era where repatriation would prove impossible, our dead would forever remain interred on the fields where they fell. Those who did come home would carry the physical and mental scars for the rest of their lives. Often the families they would return to would never be the same again. It is the responsibility of all of us to ensure that the sacrifices of that generation are never forgotten.

Whether it is the Soldiers and Sailors Memorial on the Esplanade in Cairns, the Soldiers Memorial Gate of Honour in Townsville, the Anzac Memorial Park in Millmerran or the Women's War Memorial, among others, at Anzac Square here in Brisbane, Queenslanders have and will continue to honour those who serve and remember those who died. It is the least we can do given the magnitude of what they gave. Lest we forget.