



MEDIA BACKGROUND

Remembrance Day

Australians who served

- » First World War 1914–1918
- » More than 416,000 Australians enlisted during WW1, with more than 331,000 serving overseas.
- » Australians on the Western Front—some 295,000.
- » Australians in the Middle East—more than 20,000.
- » Australians at Gallipoli—more than 50,000.
- » Many of those served in more than one theatre of operation during the war.

Deaths

- » Total Australian deaths for WW1—more than 60,000.
- » Australians on the Western Front—more than 45,000.
- » Australians in the Middle East—more than 1500.
- » Australians at Gallipoli—some 8200.

Prisoners of war

- » More than 4000 Australians became prisoners of the Germans or the Turks having been captured on the Western Front, on Gallipoli or in the Middle East.
- » Some 3850 were captured by Germans on the Western Front.
- » 217 were prisoners of Turkish forces held captive in various locations across Turkish territory.
- » More than 370 Australians died whilst in captivity during WW1.

Medals

- » 63 Victoria Crosses were awarded to Australians in WW1.
- » 53 of these were awarded between June 1916 and October 1918 on the Western Front in France and Belgium.
- » Nine were awarded to Australians who fought at Gallipoli.
- » One was awarded to an Australian who fought in Palestine.

History

After accepting the terms presented by General Foch of the French Army, the Germans signed an Armistice bringing an end to the First World War.

The armistice came into effect at 11 am on 11 November 1918. In Australia and other allied countries, including New Zealand, Canada and the United States, 11 November became known as Armistice Day — a day to remember those who died in the First World War.

After the Second World War, the Australian Government agreed to the United Kingdom's proposal that Armistice Day be renamed Remembrance Day to commemorate those who were killed in both World Wars. Today the loss of Australian lives from all wars, conflicts and peace operations is commemorated on Remembrance Day.

Observation of silence at 11 am

As a mark of respect to those who have died and suffered, Australians are encouraged to pause at 11 am to observe one minute's silence and reflect on the loss and suffering caused by war. The idea of one minute's silence was first suggested in a letter published in the *London Evening News* of 8 May 1919 by Edward George Honey, an Australian journalist working in London, who proposed "five silent minutes of national remembrance" as a tribute to the war dead.

King George V tested the practicality of five minutes' silence, and issued a proclamation on 7 November 1919 which called for two minutes' silence. At 11 am on 11 November 1919,

Australians paused for the first time in silent tribute to the members of the 1st Australian Imperial Force (AIF) who had died in the First World War. In 1997, the Governor-General issued a proclamation urging all Australians to observe the one minute silence on Remembrance Day.

Poppies

Traditionally poppies are worn on Remembrance Day. The tradition has its origins in a poem written in 1915 by Lieutenant Colonel John McCrae, who was inspired by the thousands of red poppies that grew across the battlefields of the Western Front.

*In Flanders fields the poppies blow
Between the crosses, row on row
That mark our place; and in the sky
The larks, still bravely singing, fly
Scarce heard amid the guns below.*

*We are the dead. Short days ago
We lived, felt dawn, saw sunset glow,
Loved and were loved, and now we lie
In Flanders fields.*

*Take up our quarrel with the foe;
To you, from failing hands, we throw
The torch; be yours to hold it high.
If ye break faith with us who die
We shall not sleep, though poppies grow
In Flanders fields.*