

What ANZAC day means to me

It's April 25. The local pub is crowded with blokes. Some of them proudly wear medals, some berets, maybe a slouch hat. They sip their VB, discussing the days when everything was much simpler, seeing old mates again, and remembering the ones that they won't. Tears, laughter, the ANZAC spirit. ANZAC day.

The closest bonds formed between men are created through hardship, and Australian Soldiers, Sailors and Airmen are the few who truly know hardship. Regardless of which conflict, or whether they volunteered or were conscripted, I have utter respect for a person who steps up to the challenge to face Australia's or our allies' enemies. I respect the lives lost, and I respect the relatives who remember their sacrifice. It is my choice to follow in their footsteps. I've thought about this for a long time, and truly that's what ANZAC day means to me, put in the simplest terms: Respect.

I have researched much about people who go to war, and about those who live through it. I've learnt how they left their farms, their towns, and their cities to follow a supposed life of adventure and ended up losing their innocence, and in some cases, their friends. They fought for a cause they believed in, against a true evil. Some of their fates were decided by a lottery! They had no choice but to join and serve their country in a hellish nightmare which claimed the minds of many. I have researched about the few who continue to protect our freedom from those who desire to take it from us, who volunteer to fight the faceless enemy in a tough, inhospitable society many flee to Australia to get away from, in a war that many claim isn't ours to fight. I have learnt respect for soldiers in all theatres of war.

And I respect the day, the overwhelming silence, where Australians give up an insignificant portion of their time to honour the men and women who served, and continue to serve, our beautiful country in truly our little slice of heaven. They protected us, and we respect them on ANZAC day.

I've made phone calls, filled out paperwork, looked for my birth certificate numbers, and found my passport. I have spent many months of holidays physically training, running, and cycling at 4:30 in the morning. I have attended gym at school every single available lunchtime. I want to prove myself worthy to continue the ANZAC legend, to maintain ideals, and to respect the people who preserve our way of life so very well. My first face-to-face interview with a defence force recruiter is coming up soon. And it all comes down to respect. It's all I want to do when I leave school, I can't imagine it any other way.

Last year I sent in my essay to join the Canberra Tour. I wasn't successful, but I distinctly remember you telling me to continue with my aspirations. And I have. It was a farfetched idea back then, but now, with the possibility of my dream coming true, I really wish to take this opportunity to see the dawn service. This means a lot to me, the whole ANZAC tradition means a lot. I hope I can represent this school in a manner that reflects the Paduan ideal, with courtesy and respect.