



War and its aftermath

I know nothing of life but despair, death

The former WWI German soldier, and well-known author, Erich Maria Remarque, speaks for the millions of young men caught up in the war.

'I am young, I am twenty years old; yet I know nothing of life but despair, death, fear, and fatuous superficiality cast over an abyss of sorrow. I see how peoples are set against one another and, in silence, unknowingly, foolishly, obediently, innocently slay one another.

I see that the keenest brains of the world invent weapons and words to make it yet more refined and enduring. And all men of my age, here and over there, throughout the whole world see these things; all my generation is experiencing these things with me.'

Erich Maria Remarque. *All Quiet on the Western Front*, 1929



Australian soldiers, Chateau Wood near Ypres, Belgium 1917. Frank Hurley

“How senseless is everything that can ever be written, done, or thought, when such things are possible.”

Erich Maria Remarque.
All Quiet on the Western Front, 1929

The consequences of war

We acknowledge the bravery and sacrifice of those who served during WWI. They were doing what they thought was right in the service of their country.

The terrible consequences of war, though, need to be faced:

- ◆ the death and injury toll experienced by participants, and
- ◆ the longer-term impacts, on them and their families, that are still not sufficiently recognized, or addressed
- ◆ the deaths, injuries, disease and starvation of civilians
- ◆ the displacement of peoples resulting in large numbers of refugees
- ◆ the destruction of cities, towns and villages, people's livelihoods, culture and the natural environment.



'The Light of Peace in the trenches on Christmas Eve: A German soldier opens the spontaneous truce by approaching the British lines with a small Christmas tree'.

War does not end war

'War does not end war, but engenders hatred and sows the seeds of future strife.

As we cannot but live alongside foreign nations, and must desire to do so peaceably, we should seek in every way possible to gain their goodwill, and all our dealings with them should be on the lines of equal justice and a recognition of the rights of others.

Herein is our best defence.'

General Meeting for Australia, October 1908



Memories and lessons of war

'A century ago we got it wrong. We sent thousands of young Australians on a military operation that was barely more than a disaster.

It's right that a hundred years later we should feel strongly about that. But have we got our remembrance right? What lessons haven't we learned about war, and what might be the cost of our Anzac obsession?'

James Brown. *Anzac's Long Shadow: the Cost of our National Obsession*, 2014.

The human cost of WW1

It was because of the carnage, and horror, of WW1 that it became known as the "war to end all wars". Assessments of war casualties vary and the impact of the war on civilians is often ignored.

	Population (millions)	Military deaths (all causes)	Civilian deaths (all causes)	Total deaths	Military wounded
Australia	4.5	59,330 to 62,080		59,330 to 62,080	152,170
All countries who participated	960.2	8,252,500 to 10,740,000	6,910,000 to 7,250,000	15,162,500 to 17,990,000	22,078,350 to 23,674,200

Based on: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World_War_I_casualties (27.7.2014). Note: Figures rounded.

Futility

Move him into the sun –
Gently its touch awoke him once,
At home, whispering of fields unsown.
Always it woke him, even in France,
Until this morning and this snow.
If anything might rouse him now
The kind old sun will know.

Think how it wakes the seeds –
Woke, once, the clays of a cold star.
Are limbs so dear-achieved, are sides
Full-nerved, – still warm, – too hard to stir?
Was it for this the clay grew tall?
– O what made fatuous sunbeams toil
To break earth's sleep at all?

Wilfred Owen, 1918



The morning after the first battle of Passchendaele, 1917. Frank Hurley.

