

Good morning everyone — teachers, parents, special guests, and most importantly, students. Thank you for inviting me to your ANZAC Day assembly. It's a privilege to be here.

For those I haven't met, my name is Evan Parker. I'm an Army veteran who served in Afghanistan and Iraq, I'm the Secretary of the Clayfield-Toombul RSL, and most importantly, I'm an EJ dad.

Most of you walk past the memorial gates at the front of this school every single day. And most days you probably don't think about it. But those gates are there for a reason. They honour people from this very neighbourhood — from Clayfield, from Eagle Junction — who went to war and never came home. Every single day, you walk past their memory.

That's what ANZAC Day is about. We pause. We remember. We say thank you.

ANZAC stands for the Australian and New Zealand Army Corps. On the 25th of April 1915 — 111 years ago — thousands of young Australian and New Zealand soldiers landed on the beaches at Gallipoli in Turkey.

The cliffs were steep. The enemy was waiting. And what was supposed to be a quick campaign became 8 months of hardship and loss. More than 11,000 Australians never came home. That's more than ten times every student in this school. Many of them were not much older than your big brothers and sisters.

But here's what's important. ANZAC Day isn't **only** about Gallipoli. Australians have served in conflicts all around the world over the past 100 years — in the Second World War, in Korea, in Vietnam, in East Timor, in Iraq & Afghanistan, **and in peacekeeping missions** that continue today.

This year marks 60 years since Australian soldiers fought one of the toughest battles of the Vietnam War. Some of your grandparents may have served during that time. The ANZAC spirit didn't end at Gallipoli. It has been carried forward by every generation since.

Now, students - hands up if you're in the best school house at EJ. Good. Now keep your hand up if you know where your house name comes from.

Duntroon is where Army officers are trained. Creswell is where Navy officers are trained. And Point Cook is where Air Force officers were trained. Those aren't just team names. **Every time** you line up in your house colours or cheer at a sports carnival, you're carrying a connection to the story of service in this country.

So what does the ANZAC spirit actually look like? And what does it have to do with you?

Everything. You're already practising it — you just might not know it yet.

Your Learning Powers — Brave, Persistent, Collaborative, Curious, Creative, Reflective, Focused — **those aren't just words for the classroom**. The ANZACs lived every one of them, long before Eagle Junction gave them a name.

Brave doesn't mean you're not scared. The soldiers at Gallipoli were terrified. Brave means doing the right thing even when it's hard — **that's you** standing up for a classmate, or trying something new, something you might not be good at.

Persistent means you don't quit when things get tough. Soldiers kept going when they were tired, hungry, and uncomfortable — **not for themselves**, but for each other. **You show** persistence every time you stick with something difficult instead of giving up.

Collaborative — that's what ANZACs call mateship, and it's the heart of the ANZAC spirit. No soldier ever succeeded alone. They relied on the people beside them.

You do the same when you include someone, or help a friend in a time of need.

And reflective — that's what today is. Taking a moment to stop and think. To remember why these things matter, and to ask yourself how you can carry them forward.

You don't need to wear a uniform to live by the ANZAC spirit.

You live it when you're kind.

When you're brave.

When you look out for the people around you — not for a reward, but because it's the right thing to do. Service isn't just about the military. It's about showing up for your community, your school, and your friends.

So I ask you today — when you walk past the memorial gates, stop for a second, look up. Remember the ANZACs those gates were built for.

And ask yourself one question: what can I do today that would make them proud?

Be brave. Be kind. Be someone others can count on.

Lest we forget.