

## Why we Commemorate Remembrance Day

In Australia, Remembrance Day is observed on 11<sup>th</sup> November. Services are held at 11.00am at War Memorials, schools and in towns across the country. During the service the “Last Post” is sounded by a bugler followed by one minute silence and “Reveille”.

This tradition was started after World War I, as at 11.00am on 11<sup>th</sup> November, 1918 the guns on the Western Front fell silent after more than four years of warfare, this was due to the Germans calling for an armistice (suspension of fighting) in order to secure a peace settlement. The Germans accepted the Allied terms of unconditional surrender.

The moment when hostilities ceased on the Western Front became universally associated with the remembrance of those who had died during the war, as this first modern world conflict had brought about the mobilisation of over 70 million people and left between 9 and 13 million dead with as many as one-third of them with no known grave.

On the first anniversary, 11<sup>th</sup> November, 1919 the two minutes silence was included as a part of the main commemorative ceremony at the new Cenotaph in London. The silence was proposed by an Australian journalist working in Fleet Street, Edward Honey. King George V personally requested all the people of the British Empire to suspend normal activities for two minutes on the hour of the armistice “which stayed the world wide carnage of the four preceding years and marked the victory of Right and Freedom”.

On the second anniversary, 11<sup>th</sup> November, 1920 the commemoration became a funeral, when the remains of an Unknown Soldier from the battlefields of the Western Front were returned. The entombment in London attracted over one million people within a week to pay their respects to the Soldier. Most other Allied nations have adopted the tradition of entombing Unknown Soldiers.

In Australia on the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary, 11<sup>th</sup> November, 1993 Remembrance Day ceremonies became the focus of national attention again as the remains of an Unknown Australia Soldier, exhumed from a WWI military cemetery in France were ceremonially entombed in the Australian War Memorial in Canberra. This ceremony re-established Remembrance Day as a significant day of commemoration in Australia.

Four years later in November, 1997 the Governor-General Sir William Deane issued a proclamation formally declaring 11 November Remembrance Day and encouraging all Australians to observe one minute’s silence at 11.00am on 11<sup>th</sup> November each year to remember those who died or suffered for Australia’s cause in all wars and armed conflicts.