Headmaster, Distinguished Guests, Teachers, Staff, Students and the entire Macarthur Family

We are gathered here today in the perfect setting where the youth of today and leaders of tomorrow enter to learn and go out to serve, to remember the proud history of ANZAC.

Today is a sombre day, yet another Australian soldier fighting for our country and what it believes, died early this morning in Afghanistan. Whilst we are all here, where it is safe; I’d like you to remember that there are a significant portion of the Australian Defence Force deployed overseas on combat and peace keeping operations. These soldiers daily face adversity similar to that experienced by the ANZACs on the Gallipoli peninsula, back in 1915. May the Lord watch over them and protect them.

Since the first dawn service on ANZAC Day in 1923, many speeches have been given recalling the valour, resourcefulness, comradeship and endurance of our brave forces. When I was in my final year at school here in 1993, the then PM Paul Keating stated in his ANZAC Day speech at the Australian War Memorial,

"That is surely at the heart of the Anzac story, the Australian legend which emerged from the war. It is a legend not of sweeping military victories so much as triumphs against the odds, of courage and ingenuity in adversity. It is a legend of free and independent spirits whose discipline derived less from military formalities and customs but more from the bonds of mateship and the demands of necessity."

These soldiers’ traits as summed up in one acronym ANZAC, it stands for the Australian and New Zealand Army Corps, but it symbolises an Australian Spirit.

The ANZAC’s established the Australian national identity. I see and know that the ANZAC spirit is alive and well here at Macarthur. It has often been said that Australia came of age on the morning some 14 years after Federation. That maybe true, and perhaps that is why we hold the day in such high regard in our national calendar.

History tells us that, the all volunteer ANZACs were in Gallipoli for only 8 months. During the campaign; 7,600 Australians and 2,500 New Zealanders died, although we forget some 24,000 were wounded. We do not remember Gallipoli as a great military victory, because the landing and subsequent battle was not that. The ANZAC force was landed at the wrong place after setting out at about 3.30am from the fleet of ships anchored offshore, on a night so dark that not even the shoreline was visible.

They initially encountered fairly light rifle fire from the Turkish defenders but the Turkish positions were quickly reinforced and by mid morning the ANZACs were faced with withering
rifle and machine gun fire from above. At the end of that first day 2,000 men lay dead for the gain of about six square kilometres and an advance of scarcely one kilometre inland, where they clung desperately to a small foothold.

It was a military disaster from any viewpoint, except for the well-planned and successful evacuation which followed. But of course it is just not Gallipoli we remember during this time, nor is it even the First World War. This is time set aside for us to collectively give thanks to all those men and women who have put their lives at risk and in many cases paid the supreme price. We also acknowledge the losses and sacrifices of their families.

I now would like to draw your attention to the soldiers surrounding Macarthur’s Memorial. This is a catafalque party of five young and current serving soldiers which I have the honour to command. These five soldiers come from around the country, from different backgrounds, different schools to serve as one. They are mounted around the memorial as a sign of admiration, paying their respect to those who have not come home and protect those who lie in state symbolised by this memorial. The soldiers resting on arms are all of the rank of Private, they are lead by LCPL Ulrich, they each have a different job within the Army, Drivers, Cooks, Operator Supply and Vehicle Mechanics, they symbolise every Australian and they proudly serve.

ANZAC day is a day for all Australians, regardless of religion, racial background or even place of birth. It is a day to commemorate the bravery and self-sacrifice of past and present generations. It is a day to acknowledge the selflessness of all those who have been prepared to lay down their lives for Australia so that it can be a place of freedom for all.

The Gallipoli campaign was a failure, and yet of all the battlefields on which Australians have died, it is the disastrous Gallipoli campaign that has come to symbolise the Australian soldier's courage, determination, fighting prowess but more importantly humour and mateship. The essence of Gallipoli was that in the face of adversity and potential defeat, the Australian spirit, the ANZAC spirit triumphed.

History shows that, for a peace loving people, we have been a formidable adversary, when stirred to action. On every occasion when Australians have been called upon to protect freedom, soldiers like those standing before you have done so generously, effectively and efficiently.

Today, we have the need of the qualities of the ANZAC, what is known as the ANZAC spirit. We should continue to draw on it, for it can only make our community more diverse and cooperative. At this service today, remember the spirit of ANZAC. Remember their courage, their initiative, their determination and more importantly their mateship; This is all summed up as the ANZAC spirit.

To all the Students, bear in mind that this world is there for you to make your own. Use it well and remember that without the sacrifices of the ANZACs and those ADF members who have come after them, you may not have a world as you now know it.

As a former student and a current serving member of the ADF, it has been a great honour to address the family of Macarthur. I hope I have impressed upon you the ANZAC spirit, I hope
you continue to reflect during the day and understand that the ANZAC spirit is certainly encapsulated at Macarthur.

May God continue to protect you, the students and family of Macarthur. May he also look after and sustain our courageous soldiers, sailors, airmen and women on duty overseas and throughout the country, their families, and their loved ones.