



PRIME MINISTER

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

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**SPEECH FOR THE PRIME MINISTER
VETERANS' FAREWELL BREAKFAST
LADY DAVIDSON HOSPITAL
SYDNEY - 19 APRIL 1990**

Ministers,
Distinguished Guests,
Veterans,
Ladies and Gentlemen

If memory serves me right, it was sometime late in 1988 - the Year of the Bicentenary - that Kim Beazley mentioned to me that Bill Hall, as Patron of the World War I Veterans' Association of New South Wales, had raised with him a great idea:

That the Australian Government might provide some assistance for a group of World War I Veterans to return to Gallipoli for the 75th Anniversary of the landing.

Now we are on the eve of making that idea - however improbable at first glance, however daunting in its execution - a reality.

And I count it as one of the great privileges conferred upon me by the people of Australia, to be able to take part in what is truly called the Pilgrimage to Gallipoli.

And the greatest part of that privilege is to be in this magnificent company - this splendid group of veterans, the Australians of Gallipoli.

When I announced officially last Anzac Day that the Pilgrimage would indeed take place, I had four considerations especially in mind.

First was the intrinsic national importance of this 75th Anniversary, the commemoration of an event which has never lost its hold on the imagination of the Australian people.

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Second was the immense contribution that event made towards establishing a sense of the Australian national identity; and equally the importance I have always attached to strengthening that sense of identity - the fundamental unity of our richly diverse community.

Third, I welcomed the opportunity offered by this anniversary for Australia, as a nation, to make a special act of homage, not only to the surviving veterans of World War I, but to all Australian ex-servicemen and women.

And fourth, I had very much in mind the growing awareness and interest being shown in their country's history by the new generation, as evidenced by the thousands of young Australians who are now making a point of visiting Gallipoli; and doing so, not so much as tourists, but consciously and deliberately as an act of pilgrimage and homage.

Now, as the veterans here will understand - better perhaps than anybody else in the world - it is one thing to make an executive decision to go to Gallipoli; and quite another thing actually to get there.

It takes planning.

I am glad to say - and you will be very glad to hear - that the planning for the second landing is a definite improvement on the planning for the first.

This time round, it is an all-Australian show. And this time around it is not Turkish resistance that we face, but wholehearted assistance for which I am most grateful.

In the organisation of the pilgrimage I pay tribute to my colleagues, Ben Humphreys and Kim Beazley. Without their efforts and their enthusiasm, this pilgrimage would not have been possible.

While the work was being co-ordinated through the Gallipoli Task Force in the Department of Veterans' Affairs, all of us involved in its various stages have been gratified by the genuine spirit of co-operation with which the work has been done. I sincerely thank and congratulate all concerned. I recognise in particular the role which has been played by the RSL. And I especially wish to thank the staff of Lady Davidson Hospital for their role in providing and organising care for our veterans.

But now, with the planning complete, it is time for us to ready ourselves for the expedition itself.

I was pleased that over 400 World War I veterans, including over 100 Gallipoli veterans answered the Government's invitation last year to join the pilgrimage.

And I am delighted to say that every Gallipoli veteran who asked to be included, and who is medically fit to travel, will be on the Qantas 747 tomorrow.

And I say, quite simply, a more remarkable group of Australians has never left these shores.

As World War I veterans, they were all volunteers. And twenty-five years later, with typical Australian disregard of mere rules, and the fact that most of them were over age, 18 of them volunteered to serve in World War II. In 1939, quite a few of these veterans put their ages back to meet - or beat - the regulations - just as some of them had done, in reverse, in 1914. In uniform and on Gallipoli, aged 16!

The travelling group includes a significant number of men who were decorated, including two winners of the Distinguished Conduct Medal and three winners of the Military Medal.

With a track record like that, it is no surprise that they have volunteered to return to Gallipoli.

But perhaps the most remarkable thing of all is that these men, all of them in their nineties, should be going to Gallipoli with exactly the same spirit which impelled them the first time, 75 years ago.

Much has been written by others about the motives of the original ANZACS.

But when we read and hear what they themselves say - and they were great writers of letters, journals and diaries, these ANZACS - two things stand out: their sense of adventure, and their determination to stick with their mates.

Those are the two qualities which, I believe, more than any other, encapsulate the original spirit of ANZAC.

And now, 75 years on, you have one more adventure ahead; and next Wednesday, Anzac Day, you will, once again, be with your mates on Gallipoli.

And then, best of all, we will come home - home to Australia.