**SPEECH BY AUSTRALIAN HIGH COMMISSIONER**

**GEOFF TOOTH, AT THE NAIROBI ANZAC DAY CEREMONY, 25 APRIL 2012**

Good morning. My name is Geoff Tooth and I am Australia’s High Commissioner to Kenya. Thank you all for attending today and keeping away the rain. You have in your program an order of service for today. At the end of the ceremony we hope that everyone can attend an ANZAC breakfast and enjoy some traditional refreshments at the entrance area.

Let me begin by saying how wonderful it is to see so many Australians and New Zealanders, and especially children.

I would also like to acknowledge and warmly thank the members of the diplomatic corps and representatives of the Kenyan Government for joining us. You are all so very welcome but I would like to recognise two in particular, the Honorary Consul of New Zealand and the Ambassador of Turkey. Your Excellency, your presence and the generosity the Turkish people show each year at this time is so important to honouring all that fell at Gallipoli and since. I think it fitting to recall those extraordinary words from 1934 of your former President Ataturk, who himself fought at Gallipoli:

*Those heroes that shed their blood and lost their lives … You are now lying in the soil of a friendly country therefore rest in peace. There is no difference between the Johnnies and the Mehmets to us where they lie side by side here in this country of ours … You the mothers who sent their sons from far away countries wipe away your tears; your sons are now lying in our bosom and are in peace. Having lost their lives on this land they have become our sons as well.*

Ladies and gentlemen, To my right you will find the tombstones of Pilot Officer Brian Fowler from Auckland, New Zealand and Able Seaman Victor Jarius of Sydney, Australia. Two ANZAC sons who have been embraced and cared for by Kenya.

They are but two of many thousands of war dead in this cemetery and in cemeteries across Kenya. They are but two of the untold millions from all races and creeds who have died in wars before and since; soldiers and civilians, adults and children, women and men.

Many things inspired the first ANZACs, those that died at Gallipoli in such numbers all those years ago. Patriotism, high ideals, faith, a chance of adventure, friendship.

In turn Australians gained a legend to inspire us; a story of bravery and sacrifice, and with it, a deeper faith in ourselves and our democracy. We gained a deeper understanding of what it means to be Australian and a citizen of the world.

The ANZACs proved to a young nation that when men and women come together to undertake a great project a spirit will be found to enable them to rise above the small concerns of self-interest and pettiness.

ANZAC day represents in many ways Australia’s true independence day. Gallipoli was the first time we fought for Australia and as Australians, for the sort of world we wished to live in and be part of. For the first time we found ourselves lifted to a place among the peoples of the world. From this time we had interests to protect and advance.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

This is a day not of celebration – this is not a day to glorify conflict. Rather it is a day of national memory and education. It is a day we learn again of the horror and waste of war. It is a day for looking after your friends, cherishing your home, your neighbourhood and family. It is a day for realising just how lucky you are to live in peace and how precious peace is.

I am one of those who when visiting a World War 1 cemetery for the first time in my early twenties was shocked and shaken at the what I saw. Grave after grave, row after row, precious life after precious life. Nearly all had been younger than me; they had never had the chance to have families, to grow old, to taste all the world has to offer. Like so many before and since I could not fathom the pain and waste and shattered lives of those that had gone and those that remained. And like so many before me and since I cried.

And it is right to cry in their memory. It is right to let their story impact on you. But they deserve more. They deserve to inspire.

Today is about remembering the heroes of Gallipoli. And it is about turning that remembrance and homage into something real, something that contributes to a world where war becomes less common and less destructive.

In John Hepworth’s book The Long Green Shore an Australian soldier is remembered thus:

*They pinned no medals on him, they made no speeches, we need no medals or speeches, we know him and remember. He was just a good and ordinary bloke – that’s the point, that’s the important thing, he was an ordinary bloke like you and me.*

We all have the spirit of the ANZAC in us. All of us. The spirit of the ANZAC is also the spirit of community service, of helping others. We can honour the ANZAC’s best by standing-up against injustice and discrimination, by supporting those worse off than ourselves, by rejecting the mob, by believing in the good in people, by doing what is right. In remembering the ANZACs, we hope for something better – for loved ones, for our nations, for our world.

We must not forget.