



OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR  
VICTORIA

## **ANZAC DAWN SERVICE**

### **Friday 25 April 2025**

I begin by acknowledging the Traditional Owners of the lands on which we are gathered – the Bunurong people of the Eastern Kulin Nation – and pay my respects to their Elders, past and present and thank, in particular, Uncle Mark Brown for his warm Welcome to Country this morning.

Let me begin with a story about a man and his family.

A story that was revealed publicly only a few years ago.

Hailing from the regional Victorian town of Yendon – Thomas Frank Cahir was a long way from home when he was completing his studies in Melbourne.

He would travel even further after joining the 2<sup>nd</sup> Field Ambulance division.

Departing from Melbourne in October 1914, Frank, as he preferred to be called, did not sit his final exams – instead, 110 years ago, he was sitting in the trenches of Gallipoli.

He did not shy away from describing the war as he felt it, writing home to his family:

*“... Carrying men from off the top of the hills under an awful hail of shrapnel, but the thanks and grips of the hands of the dying and wounded would only spur you on to do more...”*

Those hands that reached out in their final moments were not the last Frank would tend to – he would continue his service on the Western Front, and later in Villers-Bretonneux.

When the guns finally fell silent, the Armistice did not end the war for Frank.

For another two-and-a-half years, he was one of the Australian volunteers searching, exhuming, and identifying the thousands of his dead countrymen among the shattered fields of Europe.

When Frank returned to Australia – his friends, his family and his home had changed – and so had he.

After seven years as a stranger, in a dangerous and foreign land, it would take only another seven before he passed away.

For generations, the Cahir family believed his death resulted from war wounds sustained years earlier – but it was later understood that he, tragically, took his own life.

A poem, published in the RSL's *Duckboard* in 1926, spoke to this experience that so many returned Anzacs had endured:

*"I am youth! Brim full of vigour,  
Unhampered by the weight of years:  
Ambition soaring higher, bigger,  
Unconquered by experienced fears.*

...

*I am age – grown grim and hoary,  
Crackling bones full of fears:  
War-worn. I tell another story,  
Learn'd in the span of so few years."*

We sometimes reflect on war as a series of battles with clear beginnings and ends.

We imagine that their ending brings a subsequent finality for those involved.

But the impacts of conflict continue to reverberate long after the cacophony of war fades into silence –

And the lowering of arms does not mean that those in that conflict are no longer gripped by it.

Today, we acknowledge the 110<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Gallipoli Campaign and pay our respects to those that made that ultimate and tragic sacrifice upon those rocky, desolate shores.

In honouring their memory, we too must extend our thoughts to those Australians that returned to our sunburnt land, and remember the physical and mental weight of conflict.

Each and every Australian who has shouldered that weight, in all conflicts and peacekeeping missions across our history, has diligently undertaken a duty of utmost importance and devotion.

Frank's story is one that many Victorians have shared in some way.

It is with a keen sense of sadness that we cast our thoughts back to a world where Frank might have completed his studies, and not spent his formative years embroiled in the devastation of war.

Nearly 100 years after his death, Frank eventually received the recognition he deserved: a Distinguished Service Medal – worn by his son, the late Pat Cahir on the same march that we will undertake today.

We owe gratitude for the service of those who have participated in these conflicts.

They made it possible for countless people to pursue their dreams in a way that so many never had the opportunity to do – freed from the weight of conflict.

Doing so in a land that offers the promise of peace, freedom and opportunity.

On behalf of Victorians, and all who have known the privilege of this peaceful, free society, I thank those who have made sacrifices and given service.

They helped shape our nation – and we must, in kind, honour their duty and their courage by cultivating a nation of security and peace.

Lest we forget.

-ENDS-