REMEMBRANCE DAY

History

Every year, on 11 November at 11 am – the eleventh hour of the eleventh day of the eleventh month – we pause to remember those men and women who have died or suffered in all wars, conflicts and peace operations.

After four years of fighting, World War I ended at 11am on the 11\textsuperscript{th} of November 1918, on the Western Front in France and Belgium. World War I began in 1914 and lasted for four years. More than 416 000 Australians volunteered for service in World War I. Of these, 324 000 served overseas. More than 60 000 Australians were killed, including 45 000 who died on the Western Front in France and Belgium and more than 8 000 who died on the Gallipoli Peninsula in Turkey. As well as Australian soldiers, many nurses in the Australian Army Nursing Service served on the Western Front. These nurses worked in overcrowded hospitals for up to 16 hours a day, looking after soldiers with shocking injuries and burns. Those who worked in hospitals close to the fighting were also in danger of being shelled by the enemy.

In Australia and other allied countries, including New Zealand, Canada and the United States, 11 November became known as Armistice Day - a day to remember those who died in World War I. The day continues to be commemorated in Allied countries. After World War II the Australian Government agreed to the United Kingdom's proposal that Armistice Day be renamed Remembrance Day to commemorate those who were killed in both World Wars. Today the loss of Australian lives from all wars and conflicts is commemorated on Remembrance Day.

In October 1997 the 11 November was declared as Remembrance Day - a day to remember the sacrifice of those who have died for Australia in wars and conflicts.
**Observance of Silence at 11am**

As a mark of respect to those who have died and suffered, people in Australia are encouraged to stop what they are doing at 11 am to observe one minute’s silence and reflect on the loss and suffering caused by war.

At 11 am on 11 November 1919, Australians, for the first time, paused and stood in silent tribute to the men and women of the 1st Australian Imperial Force who had died on battlefields in Gallipoli, Europe and in the Middle East.

**Red Poppies**

During the First World War, red poppies were the plants to spring up in the battlefields of northern France and Belgium. The rich soil with lime allowed the poppy to grow. The sight of the new growth and life of the red poppy provided a strong contrast to the devastation and death of war. In soldiers’ minds, the red became symbolic of the blood of their mates soaking the ground.

The poppies on the battlefield inspired Lieutenant Colonel John McCrae to write the poem, *In Flanders Fields*. He was a Canadian who worked during the war, treating the injured men. The suffering and loss of life he witnessed in the dressing station was hard to bear and the death of a friend and his burial in the cemetery close by moved him to write the poem.

The poppy soon became widely accepted as the flower of remembrance to be worn on Remembrance Day.
In Flanders Fields

In Flanders fields the poppies blow
Between the crosses, row on row
That mark our place; and in the sky
The larks, still bravely singing, fly
Scarce heard amid the guns below.

We are the Dead. Short days ago
We lived, felt dawn, saw sunset glow,
Loved and were loved, and now we lie
In Flanders fields.

Take up our quarrel with the foe;
To you from failing hands we throw
The torch, be yours to hold it high.
If ye break faith with us who die
We shall not sleep though poppies grow
In Flanders fields.

John McCrae