

Remembrance Day On the 11th hour on the 11th day of the 11th month, a minutes' silence is observed and dedicated to those soldiers who died fighting to protect the nation. 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 One. The day continues to be commemorated in Allied countries. After World War Two, 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.

What is the origin of Remembrance Day? 11 November is universally associated with the remembrance of those who had died in the First World War. This conflict had mobilised over 70 million people and left between 9 and 13 million dead and as many as one third of these with no grave. The Allied nations chose this day and time for the commemoration of their war dead. At 11 am on 11 November 1918, the guns on the Western Front fell silent after more than four years of continuous warfare.. **THE UNKNOWN SOLDIER** We do not know this Australian's name and we never will. We do not know his rank or his battalion. We do not know where he was born, nor precisely how and when he died. We do not know where in Australia he had made his home or when he left it for the battlefields of Europe. We do not know his age or his circumstances – whether he was from the city or the bush; what occupation he left to become a soldier; what religion, if he had a religion; if he was married or single. We do not know who loved him or whom he loved. If he had children we do not know who they are. His family is lost to us as he was lost to them. We will never know who this Australian was. Yet he has always been among those whom we have honoured. We know that he was one of the 45,000 Australians who died on the Western Front. One of the 416,000 Australians who volunteered for service in the First World War. One of the 324,000 Australians who served overseas in that war and one of the 60,000 Australians who died on foreign soil. One of the 100,000 Australians who have died in wars this century. He is all of them. And he is one of us. This Unknown Australian is not interred here to glorify war over peace; or to assert a soldier's character above a civilian's; or one race or one nation or one religion above another; or men above women; or the war in which he fought and died above any other war; or of one generation above any that has or will come later. The Unknown Soldier honours the memory of all those men and women who laid down their lives for Australia. His tomb is a reminder of what we have lost in war and what we have gained. We have lost more than 100,000 lives, and with them all their love of this country and all their hope and energy. We have gained a legend: a story of bravery and sacrifice and, with it, a deeper faith in ourselves and our democracy, and a deeper understanding of what it means to be Australian.

Why is this day special to Australians? In 1997, Governor-General Sir William Deane issued a proclamation formally declaring 11 November to be Remembrance Day, urging all Australians to observe one minutes silence at 11.00am on 11 November each year, to remember those who died or suffered for Australia's cause in all wars and armed conflicts.

We pause to remember all of the men and women of the Australian Defence Force who have made the ultimate sacrifice. We will remember them.

LEST WE FORGET