



Dr Brendan Nelson
Director

22 May 2018
ENQU10006-063755

Brigadier S.J. Dunn AM (Ret'd)
President
c/o John Robbins
Secretary
Royal Australian Regiment Association (ACT Branch)
16 Woodgate St
FARRER ACT 2607

Dear Brigadier Dunn,

Thank you for your recent letter regarding the Anzac Day National Ceremony and veterans' march. As you are possibly aware, the National Ceremony is a joint effort between the Australian War Memorial and the Returned and Services League (ACT Branch). The Memorial manages the ceremony and infrastructure and the RSL manages the march that becomes an integral part of the ceremony, so the matters you raise need to be considered by both ourselves and the RSL. I note you have also sent this letter to Mr John King, President of the RSL, and will let Mr King respond to matters under the auspices of the RSL. I will cover the elements that are the responsibility of the Memorial.

The start of the march this year was indeed later than in previous years. This was as a result of the inclusion of an address by Second World War veteran Mr Robert Semple. Due to his age (98 years old), Mr Semple spoke early in the proceedings, given he may have been unable to stay for the duration of the ceremony. I have included Mr Semple's speech and his background for your information and that of your members. Without pre-empting future decisions by the Memorial's Council about the ceremony format, I am confident that in 2019 we will return to an order in which the march will commence as in previous years and the veterans will be seated for all formalities.

Each year we manage the weather conditions on the day and this year the conditions were warmer than normal. The RSL manages veteran welfare on Anzac Parade and the Memorial cares for the marchers once they enter the Parade Ground. Water was provided to veterans at the end of the march and we encourage all attendees to dress for the conditions of the day, including hats and sunscreen. As you noted, due to the warm conditions I suspect some marchers did choose to depart after the march adding to the number of empty seats you observed.

With relation to your feedback on the sound system, this year we were asked by the RSL to trial the implementation of a new speaker configuration for the National Ceremony. We have received varied feedback on the quality of sound and also the RSL's decision to amplify only the Royal Military College band for the march. In that regard, we have ourselves sent a letter seeking their feedback on the trial and their intentions for next year's Anzac Day.

Here is their spirit, in the heart of the land they loved; and here we guard the record which they themselves made. C.E.W. Bean

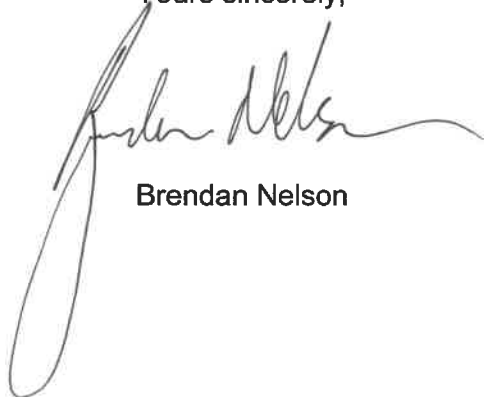
GPO Box 345
Canberra ACT 2601
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web: www.awm.gov.au

Finally, with regard to your query about barriers and security on Anzac Parade; I can advise there was no specific threat against the march. Unfortunately these security measures are a reality of the times at all events where crowds are gathered and will continue to be for the foreseeable future. I can advise that the configuration of barricades is complete after consultation with the Australian Federal Police and Roads ACT. There were in fact two sets of security measures on Anzac Parade, the barricades at the Blamey/Currong intersection to which you refer and also a second vehicle security configuration at the Constitution Avenue intersection.

Please be assured our staff prepares conscientiously for Anzac Day each year and they are very committed to delivering a ceremonial program worthy of the veterans and service personnel. I agree with you that Anzac Day is a day of national significance for all Australians. Your feedback will be incorporated into our debrief process and plans for 2019.

Thank you for taking the time to write and outline your experiences. I do hope we are able to welcome you back in the not too distant future.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Brendan Nelson', with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the left and loops back under the signature.

Brendan Nelson

Anzac Day 2018: National Ceremony, R.J.K Semple OAM BEM

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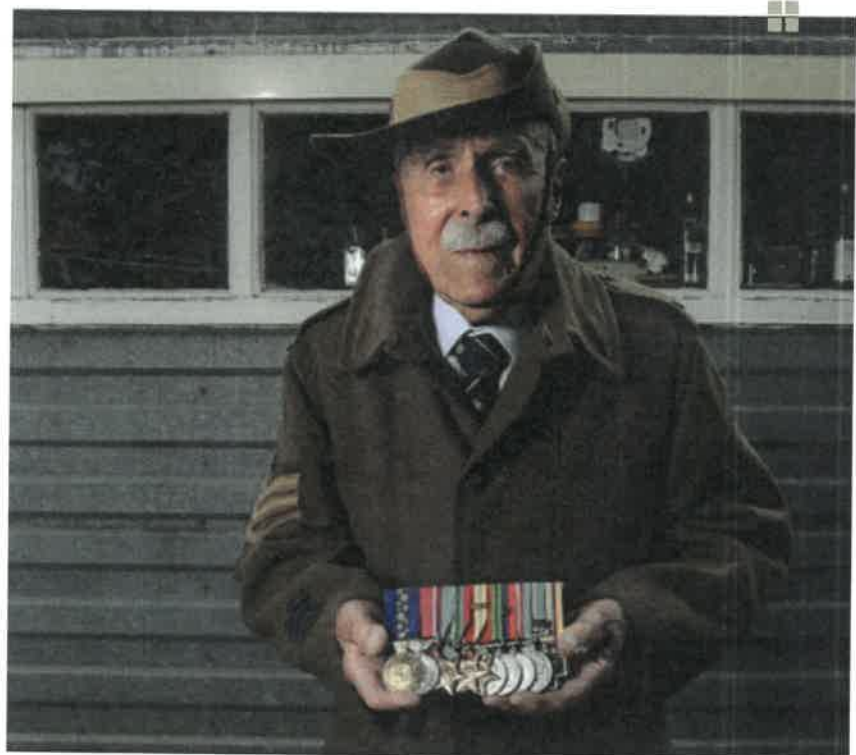
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An Address by R.J.K Semple OAM BEM
Australian War Memorial
Anzac Day 2018

Good morning to all on parade.

Thank you, Dr Brendan Nelson AO and the Council of the War Memorial for the invitation to attend the 2018 Anzac Day National Ceremony at this magnificent war memorial in Canberra.

It is an extraordinary experience to gather with National Leaders, Service Personnel, Families and Visitors at this 'Hallowed Place' to reflect on the significance of tremendous sacrifices made embracing the Anzac story and beyond.

Having served as an 'original' in the 2/12th Australian Field Regiment, 9th Australian Division, during World War II in all of its campaigns - 'Middle East' 'New Guinea' and Borneo - over five years, presented many challenges to mind and body which required a special type of mateship, discipline and motivation to achieve aims and objectives.

Quite often in times of stress in action, a reflection on the example and determination set by our Anzac forefathers provided the inspiration to go that extra yard and achieve the desired result.

I believe there are more 'Victoria Cross' winners resting below the sea - and land - and also in the air than ever walked Earth's surface. They are in God's care.

In an endeavour to perhaps more fully express some personal feelings, may I take the liberty of presenting these thoughts whilst relaxing at home post World War II, under title: "The Value of Product Knowledge Gained World War II, 1939-1945."

The anxiety and fear factor which generally preceded most new combat encounters was noticeably overcome as experience increased with each engagement.

I vividly recall the strength, loyalty and faith experienced on occasions at El Alamein... Coming under German Stuka Dive Bombing, and periodic shelling of the gun position by enemy counter battery artillery fire, we would take refuge in the skinny slit trenches, adjacent to the gun pit, holding hands across the shoulders and muttering, "If this is it we all go together." Such was the spirit within the gun crew.

These same characters have also engraved their names on the back of my old violin, which was part of our entertainment material in the gun pit, or on the tractor, cared for by the driver. It is here with me in Canberra for Dr Brendan Nelson and his team to view. The skill level of the owner has waned somewhat over the 76 years since El Alamein.

Appreciation of mateship, reliability and unquestioned trust in each other seemed to characterise the overall casual nature of the Australian make up, and was certainly experienced with my unit and the Division as a whole throughout the war.

These dualities and feelings were of great assistance in designing life after the war, and in the following rehabilitation process. To experience by circumstance, and not by design, something money could not buy, something which could not be artificially created, and certainly one of the reasons why we want to get together as often as possible, in the bond of special comradeship, centered on a cause which had a focus for a particular reason, is good for the soul, and I believe rewarding to the inner person. I am sure when we pause and reflect from time to time,

about why we come together, it has a great deal to do with circumstances and mateship.

To conclude: may I humbly say Anzac Day remains sacred to all of us. Let us continue to make reference to the past, but go forward into the future with honour and courage.

Robert Semple

Robert Semple, born and raised in Essendon Victoria, grew up playing any and every available sport. At 16 Robert joined the cadet corps of local Militia unit, the Victorian Scottish Regiment, and at 18 he transitioned into the 5th Battalion of the Victorian Scottish Regiment. Robert remembers the high tensions surrounding the continued escalation of force in Europe war in 1939, as Nazi Germany started invading Austria, Czechoslovakia and Eventually Poland.

Previously working as a Salesman at a local wholesale warehouse in Melbourne, Robert enlisted in the Army in June of 1940. Robert recalls his motivation for enlisting, *"(I had been) in a service environment and brought up in an atmosphere of respect for Family, King and Country"*. Robert joined the 2/2nd Medium Regiment, Royal Australian Artillery, which later became the 2/12th Australian Field Regiment, 9th Australian Division.

Robert had arrived in Palestine in November 1940, and were then sent to reinforce the sieged city of Tobruk. The 2/12th Regiment, having no equipment utilised an assortment of British and captured Italian guns. After Tobruk the Regiment was sent to the Lybia and then to Tripoli to relieve the 7th Australian Division and then withdrew to El Alamein with the rest of the Eighth Army.

Robert had joined the 2/12th as a gunner and then was quickly promoted to Gun Sergeant by March of 1942, ready to for the Battle of El Alamein. Robert recalls his view of the battle at the time, *"The importance of this operation was huge and many smaller but very important engagements all had to be won by degrees until the final blow. Confidence prevailed, good leadership in the main, we had faith in good equipment also with battle fitness, and trust in our mates – a quality and spirit no money could buy. In summary the communication got better as the Engagement unfolded. There is always the odd negative. But generally it was good to be part of the 8th army"*.

After the Battle the 2/12th retired to Palestine before being redeployed to Australia for leave and jungle training. Robert was involved in the Seaborne operations in Lae and Finschafen. By the time of the Japanese surrender Robert was in ongoing operations in Borneo. Robert recalled that the most memorable aspect of his military service:, *"learning to appreciate an undying special type of mateship, genuine trust, human bonds under extreme conditions and an aim to look after God's country for our future"*.

After Robert's army service, he returned to Australia and spent time getting to know his family and staying active in his community. Robert Semple was awarded the Medal of the Order of Australia in and British Empire Medal for his ongoing service to the community.