

Tropicana's ANZAC Day service reaches defence heads in Canberra



News of a unique ANZAC Day commemoration service at the Tropicana Gold Mine in the Great Victoria Desert of Western Australia made it all the way to senior members of Australia's Defence Force in Canberra.

The inaugural dawn service at Tropicana.

Organising the day at Tropicana was no small feat and required a team of volunteers to pull it all together.

The event was a first for AngloGold Ashanti Australia and got the thumbs up from the Australian Defence Force after receiving photographs of the service.

Tropicana's remote location proved no barrier when it came to the ANZAC Day inaugural dawn service ceremony, probably Australia's most important national occasion.

More than 500 AngloGold Ashanti Australia employees and contractors attended the Tropicana event to commemorate Australians and New Zealanders killed in military operations.

The date of April 25 marks the anniversary of the first major military action fought by Australian and New Zealand forces during the First World War and is probably Australia's most important national occasion. The soldiers in those forces quickly became known as ANZACs, and the pride they took in that name endures to this day.

When war broke out in 1914, Australia had been a federal commonwealth for only 13 years. The new national government was eager to establish its reputation among the nations of the world.

In 1915 Australian and New Zealand soldiers formed part of the allied expedition that set out to capture the Gallipoli peninsula in order to open the Dardanelles to the allied navies. The ultimate objective was to capture Constantinople (now Istanbul in Turkey), the capital of the Ottoman Empire, an ally of Germany.

The Australian and New Zealand forces landed on Gallipoli on April 25, meeting fierce resistance from the Ottoman Turkish defenders.

What had been planned as a bold stroke to knock Turkey out of the war quickly became a stalemate, and the campaign dragged on for eight months. At the end of 1915 the allied forces were evacuated, after both sides had suffered heavy casualties and endured great hardships. More than 8,000 Australian soldiers had been killed. News of the landing on Gallipoli had made a profound impact on Australians at home, and April 25 soon became the day on which Australians remembered the sacrifice of those who had died in the war.

Although the Gallipoli campaign failed in its military objectives, the Australian and New Zealand actions during the campaign left a powerful legacy. The creation of what became known as the "ANZAC legend" became an important part of the identity of both nations.

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Following early coordination from construction team members Craig Maxwell and Alan Astle, the dawn service was organised and conducted by AGAA's Manager: Maintenance John O'Brien. Coordinator: Mining Systems, John Perry, learnt and played both the Australian and NZ National Anthems on his Irish Uilleann pipes, in what must be a first for an Anzac Day service.

Wreaths were flown from Perth and ex-servicemen fell in at the front of the gathering. Extra meaning was given to the NZ National Anthem with a stirring Haka performance to close the ceremony.



Wreaths were flown from Perth for the ceremony while mining contractor Macmahon Holdings fabricated silhouettes to reflect the symbols of Anzac Day.

In preparation for the event an upgrade was required on ground surrounding the entry flag poles, while mining contractor Macmahon Holdings fabricated silhouettes to reflect the symbols of Anzac Day.

The day culminated in a morning tea with Australian favourites: prawns, pies, and lamingtons and of course Anzac biscuits.



Left: AGAA's Manager: Maintenance John O'Brien conducted the dawn service. Right: A stirring Haka performance was made even more poignant as the New Zealand National Anthem was played to close the ceremony.

