



PREMIER OF NEW SOUTH WALES

SPEECH BY PREMIER MORRIS IEMMA RESERVE FORCES DAY 2007 LAUNCH SATURDAY, DECEMBER 2, 2006

(check against delivery)

Sir Laurence Street, Chairman, Reserve Forces Day Council
Federal and State parliamentary colleagues
Major-General “Digger” James
Dr Timothy Wright, Headmaster of Shore
Former and serving service personnel
Ladies and gentlemen

It is an unexpectedly sombre day on which to be launching Reserve Forces Day 2007.

Our theme for next year – the great Middle East battles of 1917 – provides a distant reminder of the service and sacrifice that lie at the heart of the Australian military tradition.

But we have no need to look back 90 years to understand the price that service can entail.

In this very week, we have been vividly reminded that every Australian who joins the Defence Force accepts the possibility of losing their life for their country.

It is truly the “supreme sacrifice”, and today we honour the memory of Captain Mark Bingley and Corporal Joshua Porter, who have joined the nation’s foremost roll of honour.

It is one of the ironies of Australian history that a nation so deeply committed to democracy and peace has seen its soldiers on active service for something like one-third of all the years since Federation – including the last seven years in Timor, Afghanistan, Iraq –

- and, of course, the titanic battles of the First and Second World Wars, which together claimed the lives of 100,000 of our bravest and our best

Through all those decades, the Reserve Forces in their various manifestations – volunteer and conscripted – have been consistent and loyal in their willingness to serve.

From the early colonial militias to the reservists of today, Australia has been faithfully served by its citizen forces.

They are more than a military force.

They are essential to the safety of our people and the security of our land and its region.

And in times of need, they are also angels of mercy in tragedies at home and abroad.

Our reservists have brought credit to themselves and their families, the Defence Force and the nation.

They reflect citizenship in its best and finest form.

And it is appropriate we set aside a day each year – separate from April 25 and November 11 – to honour the special contribution of the citizen soldier; the one million Australians who have served in a reserve capacity –

- and, in particular, to remember those whose service came at the highest price of all.

It is an honour to share the launch of Reserve Forces Day 2007 – because in doing these things, we fulfil the basic duty that is owed by every Australian:

- remembrance; gratitude; honour.

Lest we forget.

ENDS