



**AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL FLAG DAY CEREMONY  
MARTIN PLACE, SYDNEY, MONDAY 3 SEPTEMBER 2007  
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Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen, girls and boys:

I am a Citizen Soldier.

Last year I was privileged to serve in the Middle East as Australia's Senior Military Public Affairs Officer.

It was fantastic to wear an Australian Flag badge on my uniform and know wherever I went in the region, I was recognised as an Australian soldier. Many of our troops have even placed small desert coloured Australian flag patches on their backpacks to show their pride in our country, me included.

It was also very comforting to travel in our Armoured vehicles and Bushmaster trucks throughout Iraq and see Australian troops proudly displaying our flag atop their aerials .

I remember being at an airport in one particular Middle East country where there was a large contingent of Coalition Forces and only two Australian soldiers – my replacement and I.



While my replacement and I waited for our aircraft we were inundated by troops from other countries keen to have photos taken of us with them.

They were very keen to be associated with Australians and the effort we were putting into the Middle East campaign.

On ANZAC Day I stood in the pre-dawn light on a barren oval in the compound of the main Australian troop body in the south of Iraq in the province of Al Muthanna.

Australia's Vice Chief of the Defence Force Lieutenant General Ken Gillespie gave the official address and said it was not far from where we were standing that our fathers and grandfathers had fought during World War Two to help restore and preserve freedom.

It was a stirring moment as I looked up at the Australian flag fluttering in the early morning breeze and thought of the many Defence Force personnel from our country who have laid down their lives so we can have the freedom and democracy we and so many others, enjoy today.

It is a fact the official Australian National Flag in World War I, World War II, Malaya and Korea was the British Union Flag. The conflicts of Vietnam, the Gulf War and the present conflict in Iraq have been fought with the Blue Ensign which is today's Australian National Flag.

I marched in the Sydney ANZAC Day parade this year for my very first time. I haven't done it before as I wanted to earn my place with other veterans, before doing so, by serving with the Army on a deployment.



It was an absolutely fantastic experience to see so many people from toddlers to grandmothers waving small Australian flags. It was thrilling to see them expressing their thanks for the work our returned service men and women and members of today's Defence Force have done and continue to do in our country's name.

The link to all this was the little Aussie flag waving from across the barricades along the march route by many outstretched hands of all shapes, sizes and colours.

On ANZAC and Remembrance Days, we stand silently and reverently as the flag is lowered and raised again. It is a time of support as we remember all the men and women of the Defence Force that have given their lives for us.

We also remember the current men and women of our Defence Force that have been sent to far off places to help bring peace and stability and are in harm's way. The Australian flag has been proudly carried into the many activities of the Australian Defence Force wherever it has pursued its' duties around the world.

By the endeavours of our troops to bring peace to many people, our flag has become a symbol and beacon for hope by those who are oppressed and seek a way of life that will bring peace, freedom of speech and a democratic future.

At the beginning I said I am a Citizen soldier.

In my civilian or community role, I have been in Scouting as a Venturer Leader in charge of youths aged 14 to 18 for more than 30 years.



At the beginning and close of most parade nights and on all major camps , the Australian flag is paraded with dignity and saluted with pride. The same simple ceremony takes place in Scout and Girl Guide Groups throughout the country on a daily basis.

On Australia Day more people are attending Local Council run events to mark our heritage and celebrate a day when we are proud to say we are Australian – no matter where we came from.

The days of standing up at the beginning of a movie in local theatres and singing the national anthem have gone... but the pride in the symbol of this great country, our flag, continues to grow.

We delight in waving the flag during events of national significance including the Olympics, Commonwealth Games, interstate and international games of sport.

What Australian is not powerfully moved by the sight of our medal winners standing proudly on the dais, as the Australian Flag is hoisted high to the stirring music of our national anthem?

Who has ever been overseas and flown into Sydney and seen the Australian flag flying on the Sydney Harbour bridge? It brings a lump to your throat and a feeling of 'I'm home' when you can see it.

Former NSW Governor Rear Admiral, Sir David Martin gave some great advice about having pride in our flag.



He challenged anyone who thought our flag was not recognized overseas to get the Flag, raise it higher, wave it more proudly and more often and more fervently, so that everyone will recognise it and recognize our pride in it. They'll see our joy in being Australian!

