

[Chris Roberts talks to Alex Sloan, ABC Canberra, 16 March 2015](#)

[On Gallipoli] Well, I think people have got to realise that the greatest sacrifice was on the Western Front. Gallipoli was an absolute tragedy and a disaster. Personally, what I think we should commemorate is the sacrifice and the commitment that these men made. I mean my great-uncle was in the Light Horse charge at The Nek, which is shown in the film *Gallipoli*, the 1982 film *Gallipoli*, and you know he was in that third line, and his last words according to a survivor were, "I don't think I am coming back from this one". And he didn't. So these men, you know, went out there, they made a commitment. It's just the sacrifice I think we should commemorate, not the, not the glory of it. And we tend to, in my view, get into what we call Anzackery, the hyperbole, the distortions. You know, you see it on some of the latest films that we're seeing on television. I don't think that's the issue, the issue is the commemoration of the sacrifice.

[On the \$300 million being spent on the commemoration] Oh, I think we're going overboard, to be honest. If you look at it I think the Brits are spending twenty million, the French about fifteen, and the Germans five million, and they made the largest sacrifice. We forget that at Gallipoli the British lost far more men than we did, and so did the French. That's not to demean the sacrifice that we had, because we lost over seven thousand, and to my mind it was a great tragedy. And it should never have happened. I don't think the campaign was ever going to succeed. And all these views that we'd knock Turkey out of the war, it'll cut the war by two years, you know, that's just nonsense. I mean Turkey wasn't propping Germany up, it was the other way round.

I think we've got to look to the future. Commemorate the past, but let's focus on the future ... And I think what the First World War distorts is that wonderful Australia we had, prior to the First World War. We were a leader in social change, you know, women had the vote. The way in which we carried forward reforms, social reforms in our country, and that's all distorted now, because of the Great War. And we've got to focus on our people, the future, our children and our grandchildren. And putting this country in really good shape.

[On his book *The Landing at Anzac, 1915*] It certainly puts I think a more balanced view of the landing, gets away from the hyperbole and the rhetoric. I mean sometimes we trot out some, you know, astounding stories about what Anzac means, and politicians sometimes use it to their own advantage, and I don't think that's right either. You know my point is, as a historian, I want to find out what really happened, write it in an engaging way, so that people will read it ...

[Regarding his great uncle who died at The Nek] Oh yeah, we have a photo of him ... I mean when I first visited Gallipoli I actually sat in the trench that he went from, and I thought a lot about him. He was a fine young man. He was 24, he'd just turned 24. And when you look at him, he's a strapping handsome young man. And you say, what a waste! What a waste! And you know, if there is anything that we should take away from our commemoration of the Great War it is the waste of going to war.