

Wilks Oration, Effective Living Centre, Adelaide, 17 April 2026

The annual Wilks Oration is hosted by the Effective Living Centre, Adelaide. It provides an opportunity for the community to hear from a prominent guest speaker. This oration is held in memory of Graham Wilks, a founder of the Effective Living Centre.

‘The Magic Pudding: The Future of Australian War Memory’

Peter Stanley

Synopsis: Remembrance of war in Australia has largely gone unquestioned. As society changes, we face renewed questions about commemoration in a very different nation. Australians are rightly now asking questions about who and what we ‘remember’, why and how, and what we continue to forget. While the understanding and commemoration of war’s place in Australian history remains important, the nexus between commemoration, Christianity, militarism, and nationalism needs to be questioned. Commemoration needs to embrace the frontier war that constituted the foundation of the Australian nation, and memories of wars among the people of a much more diverse nation.

Ladies and gentlemen, distinguished guests

Good evening, and thank you for your kind invitation, your warm welcome and your presence. I too acknowledge the original custodians of the land on which we meet.

You may be intrigued, or perhaps perplexed, asking why I’ve alluded in the title of this oration to Norman Lindsay’s *The Magic Pudding*. What has that children’s story to do with the future of war commemoration? We shall see.

Useful memorials

I’m honoured to have been asked to deliver this oration. I now understand, as I did not when I accepted your invitation, who Graeme Wilks was, what he contributed to South Australia and the wider Australian community, and why he should be remembered by an event such as this: a useful memorial

To explain; in the 1920s and again in the 1950s, there were debates and indeed arguments across Australia in which communities debated how the nation’s cities, towns and suburbs should remember the sacrifices of the Great War and the Second World War. Committees, councils and newspaper letter-writers asked, should memorials be commemorative edifices or should they become useful community assets. Broadly speaking, in the interwar period, the memorials communities chose were edifices – obelisks, tablets, and the ubiquitous digger-on-a-plinth. After the Second World War, as well as adding names to existing statues and arches,

we saw many more useful memorials: the War Memorial Swimming Pool is the classic way many country towns got their first (and only) pools.

I can well understand the Effective Living Centre deciding to honour Graeme Wilks's memory and service not by erecting a bronze bust or a piece of abstract metalwork, but by holding an event at which the kinds of challenging ideas he embodied can be advanced, considered and debated – as I hope we will this evening.

I'm especially glad to be here in Adelaide because although I can't truly claim to be a South Australian, I can affirm an affinity for your state. My family arrived in Adelaide as ten-pound poms in September 1966 (although I was just about to turn 10 and so my migration from Liverpool, then in Lancashire, cost the Stanleys nothing). We soon moved to Whyalla, where I lived until in 1975 I left for university in Canberra, where I've settled since. But that formative decade or so in South Australia (and in Whyalla, where members of my family still live) gave me what I now realise are insights into not just what Australia could be, understanding on which the progressive South Australia of the 1970s imparted a particular inflection.

Although I've only been a bird-of-passage in the 51 years since my Stateliner bus left the Flinders Street bus terminal in February 1975, I've always felt a particular affection for your state. I even published a history of the impact of the Second World War on Whyalla, and, conscious of how more populous states loom unduly in the national story, have made a point to refer to or include its people's experience of the world wars especially in various books.

The subject of this evening's oration – the future of war memory – is particularly welcome for me, because war memory – both the recollection, description and understanding of war experience and the business of commemoration, individual and public, formal and informal, official and organic – has been a theme in my career as a public, popular and academic historian at least since I joined the Australian War Memorial as a 22-year-old junior clerk in its History and Publications Section almost exactly 46 years ago.

On the day I commenced in May 1980, the Australian War Memorial Act 1980 passed its third reading. By sheer happenstance, I had found a job – doing history in a museum – at exactly the point which marked that institution's decisive transition. It went from a neglected and run-down war museum in a backwater of the Canberra bureaucracy (my Health colleagues earnestly asked whether I wanted to throw my nascent career away for a job in a place regarded as a Public Service joke) to a vigorous and ambitious national cultural institution: and it gave me the most extraordinary start as a museum professional, writer and historian.

To those who only know the Memorial as the vast (and becoming vaster) museum-memorial that Tripadvisor bills as Canberra's premier tourist attraction, the Memorial's standing in 1980 will come as a surprise. It had a small, ageing staff, was under-funded and disregarded, tacked on to Home Affairs because no one could work out which department it properly belonged to. Its annual ceremonies, on Anzac Day and Remembrance Day, were so small

they were held within the confines of the building's forecourt. But things were about to change.

### The invention of Australian military history

Without going too deeply into the details, all this changed over the next decade. Under a combination of a visionary Council, a tenacious and bureaucratically canny director and effective (new) senior staff, under its new Act, the Memorial renewed its galleries, expanded its collection, opened a research centre, revived its commemorative ceremonies and embarked on ambitious program of supporting and publishing research in Australian military history.

We were fortunate in that under the impulse of what I'll call Whitlamist nationalism, and despite the bitterness and division of the Vietnam decade (which ended only five years before the new Act) Australia saw a revival in interest in its military history. A boom began, impelled by books such as Bill Gammage's *The Broken Years* and films such as Peter Weir's *Gallipoli*. That started a wave which I and many others have ridden for the past forty odd years. Interest in family history and in what publishers love to call 'telling Australian stories' sustained and amplified the wave. It's a wave that's only now subsiding, as many Australians begin to question the nexus between military endeavour and national identity.

It might be stretching a long bow to claim that the 1970s saw 'the invention of Australian military history', but it's broadly true that, as I argued in my recent book *Beyond The Broken Years*, before then 'Australian military history' was largely written by people – mostly men – who had experienced war, and that since then, it's been written by people who had not experienced war, who treat it *as history*, not memory. (And excuse the self-promotion ...)

All this is a reminder that what we see now as usual, normal in popular history anyway – the celebration of Australian military service in war, the hyperbolic veneration of Australian martial valour, claims of how deeply Australia has been affected by war; assumptions about the importance of war in Australia's national identity – these are relatively recent manifestations of the relationship between Australians and war. To understand these developments in context, as historians are wont to say, demands that I digress to offer lecturettes histories of war its commemoration in Australia and how that has changed.

### War and Australian history

It might sound curious to claim this, but Australia has arguably not been vitally affected by war directly, not in international or comparative terms. How is that so, you might ask? That claim is at odds with the conventional Australian rhetoric on war – that war has been integral to the national experience. That claim needs to be carefully explained and justified.

About 200,000 Australians have died in war. That figure may surprise you. I'm accepting the figure of about 100,000 deaths in the Australian Wars – there is a range, and no one knows, but I think that this figure is justifiable. Clearly, frontier conflict vitally affected First nations peoples.

Certainly, Australia suffered grave losses in the Great War – the usual figures are 60,000 dead out of the 300,000 who served overseas. It is often said that Australia suffered the highest proportional losses of all belligerent nations, a claim which needs to be heavily qualified. Remember the proportional losses of nations such as Serbia (which lost 18% of its entire population), France or Germany (each about 4%, about four times Australia's). While Australia's 60,000 was about 20% of its mobilised force, that represented just 1.2% of Australia's population. The figure of deaths as a proportion of the force was so high because the AIF was almost entirely a front-line fighting force. None of that is intended to gainsay or minimise the human quantum of suffering, but we need to bear these comparisons in mind.

It is also true that the experience of being captured, especially the 22,000 Australians captured by the Japanese, profoundly affected the lives of PoWs and their families. Again, while not dismissing the effects on individuals and families, the comparison with other nations and experiences helps us to keep this in perspective. Look at the proportional losses of Germans and Russians captured on the 'Eastern front' – with death rates around 90%, or experiences such as that of the Poles, who besides enduring the longest and cruellest occupations, suffered horrors such as the massacre of Katyn. The greatest contrast of course is with the pan-European Nazi Holocaust and its six million dead.

Unlike many European countries, Australia has not since 1900 suffered (for example), defeat, invasion, occupation (or its concomitants, collaboration and liberation), mass bombing or the disruption of refugees. We have not seen a Blitz, a Leningrad, a Normandy liberation, Soviet conquest or, of course, a Holocaust. While war has helped to shape the national experience and identity, it has overwhelmingly been through the exploits of forces which fought overseas, and which (except for the Great War) suffered *relatively* light losses.

#### War commemoration in Australia

While war has not been the most important thing in Australian history, no one would deny that war has shaped the human history of this continent, at least since 1788. Three wars have exerted profound impacts: first, the Australian Wars from 1788 to around 1900, but perhaps later in some versions – I'll talk about those conflicts presently.

Second, and most obviously, the Great War of 1914-18, which affected arguably all Australians, as the war imposed lasting changes on politics and society, and on those who lived with its effects. That war bequeathed us the idea of the Anzac legend, one of the crucial components of what has since been seen as an Australian identity.

Third, the Second War, which saw the nation exposed to the actuality of attack and the possibility of invasion, produced several significant consequences – rapid economic and industrial change, the impulse toward a greater assertion of independence internationally (though immediately undercut by transferring strategic subservience from Britain to the United States), and the massive postwar migration program, which essentially created the multi-cultural society we celebrate today.

Of course other conflicts had effects – you might immediately think of the divisions of the Vietnam war, though they have proved to be less long-lasting than many feared.

Throughout all of these conflicts (except the first – again, more later) a feature of Australia’s experience of war has been to devote special attention to remembering individually those who served or died in war: that is not a universal response. Memorials to the handful of dead of imperial adventures in the Sudan or China became a mark of Australia’s awareness that the cost of war in lives should be remembered. That impulse gave South Australia its magnificent – and highly democratic – South African war memorial outside Government House. (It’s recently become a battlefield over whether it should bear the name of the disgraced and arguably South Australian war criminal, multiple murderer Harry ‘Breaker’ Morant. That’s a sign of how war memorials in this country matter – far more even than in nations which might have a much longer, more costly and more complex history of conflict than have we.)

The world wars, and the Great War especially, set the paradigm of war remembrance in Australia. Often, every volunteer’s name was recorded: certainly, each one who died was individually commemorated. Each has an individual file now digitised by National Archives. The dead were commemorated upon several memorials – upon school and church honour boards, on community memorials, typically on the main street of towns and suburbs; upon state memorials (of which South Australia’s beautiful sculptural group is the most perfect expression of how the state grieved and remembered its loss).

Finally, not only was every death commemorated in cemeteries and memorials on battlefields (thanks to the magnificent and tragic institution of the Imperial (later Commonwealth) War Graves Commission) but the name of everyone who died in uniform was also cast on the Roll of Honour in the Australian War Memorial, in the nation’s capital.

Australia is one of the few nations of the world which can truthfully claim that every single one of its citizens who have died in war overseas in uniform are known and commemorated by name. This demonstrates how war commemoration became a part of the fabric of the society which endured, fought in, was shaped by and literally remembered the two world wars.

The history of war commemoration in Australia became a fit subject for study relatively recently. Its first and arguably definitive expression was the late Ken Inglis’s monumental book, *Sacred Places*, sub-titled *War Memorials in the Australian Landscape*, published and revised between 1996 and 2013. A platoon of scholars, notably Bruce Scates, Michael McKernan, Carolyn Holbrook, John Stace and many others, have deepened our understanding of the complex and changing history of commemoration in Australia. (And please note, I say ‘commemoration’, not the American ‘memorialisation’: we must resist the gravitational pull of our language’s death star.)

But war commemoration is changing

That commemoration in Australia is changing, and that it always has changed, as society has changed, is central to my argument. Some here may only know the brash, flag-waving clapping and cheering of Anzac Day today, with its uniforms, military vehicles and even fly-overs by RAAF aircraft. Some may remember the later years of the ‘old’ Anzac Day, when

crowds watched largely in solemn silence, clapping gently when ‘the returned sisters’ marched by.

Anzac Day changed because society changed. The proportion of bereaved parents of the Great War diminished through the ‘thirties, refreshed again from 1939, again falling in the 1960s, and of course the number of ‘returned men’ – now called ‘veterans’ also fell, so that now no Second World War veteran ‘marches’, and even the Vietnam generation is declining, now supplanted by smaller numbers of veterans of recent conflicts and peacekeeping.

The crowds now thankfully include few bereaved families: they now think of great-great uncles from the First World War or grandfathers from Vietnam. The direct effects of war are becoming a distant memory for most Anglo-Celtic families.

Younger veterans with regular service in relatively small numbers now predominate. Groups which would once have not been allowed now march: family members, ethnic groups (even of former enemies), and cadets or school children. Many smaller communities can barely sustain a ceremony, and the great majority of spectators actually watch the march on television, and events are planned and broadcast as much for the benefit of the media as for participants.

Anzac Day, and war commemoration generally, has changed, and *will* change. Our challenge as a society is to discuss and decide *how* that will happen.

My little history lessons are now over: now to look to the future.

### Threats and opportunities

In developing a healthy attitude to war memory, I see three threats, and three opportunities which we need to consider. The three threats are what’s known as Anzackery, the Christian monopoly of commemoration and the prospect of more wars.

Turning to a more positive view, the opportunities which I believe Australia needs to embrace are: to commemorate the Australian Wars, to incorporate into popular memory what I’ll call ‘ethnic Anzacs’, and thirdly to accept that in a pluralist Australia, war memory needs to extend beyond the confines of old Australian identity and ethnicity.

I’ll explain each of these positions in turn. First, the threats, and first of them is ‘Anzackery’.

### The threat of Anzackery

What is ‘Anzackery’? This useful term was coined over sixty years ago by the historian Geoff Searle, himself a wounded veteran of the New Guinea campaign, who in the late 1960s detected and suspected the undue exaggeration of Anzac as a force in Australian life.

Anzackery looks a lot like the stereotypical expressions of national pride, with the most egregious features sporting fixtures, the conversion of Anzac into a brand and the control over it exerted by the media and governments. The old, ‘organic’ Anzac Day seems extinct, surviving seemingly only in small communities. In April 2015, I sought refuge from the excesses of the Centenary of Anzac on Norfolk Island. There, I found a genuine community

ceremony that restored my faith in its authenticity. How can we maintain a genuine sense of organic, community commemoration, in the face of the manipulation and management of the day by the media, by commercial interests and not least by governments exploiting commemoration as a tool of political leverage.

#### The threat of a Christian monopoly

Secondly, it's not news to this audience, but Australia is no longer a Christian nation, though it might be surprising to consider for how long that has been so. While in wartime virtually every member of Australia's forces wore identification discs giving their name, service number and religious denomination, the number and proportion for whom their faith is a vital part of their lives is declining. (Historians of the Great War wrangle over the proportions of the AIF who were active or nominal Christians.) Paradoxically, Australia has over recent decades become both an increasingly secular society, and a more religiously pluralist one. Despite the growth in evangelical denominations and non-Christian adherents, the trend is away from the dominance enjoyed by Christian denominations up to and somewhat beyond the Second World War.

And yet, war commemoration adheres to Christian traditions and rituals, the ultimate symbol the Cross of Sacrifice (with its Crusader's sword) in all Commonwealth cemeteries of any size. This monopoly increasingly jars with a more complex, diverse society. We must recognise that while Australian Defence Force chaplains now include imams as well as padres and rabbis, the default form of interment remains Christian, including explicitly Christian prayers.

I say this with some regret. Having been brought up in a progressive Protestant tradition, I know that one of the strengths of Christian liturgy is its ability to express profound emotions in ways that can bring consolation and healing. I'm not arguing that Christian forms should be rejected, but that we should draw on other traditions, whether humanist or religious. In a tolerant society forms of commemoration should be neither prescribed nor proscribed. I agree with the Rationalist Society of Australia's recent – but unfortunately rebuffed – approaches to the Australian War Memorial, arguing for debate and for the Christian *monopoly* on commemoration to change.

#### The threat of more wars

The third and final threat to effective commemoration is the prospect of more conflict. We now know that the hope that the Great War was the war to end war was always impossible. With our world in an increasingly unstable condition, we will surely see more and greater conflicts, not fewer or limited ones. Australia's now even more secure entanglement to the US alliance, through the Anzus and Aukus treaties, increases the risk that regardless of the wishes of the Australian people, this or future governments may commit us to future wars.

My present purpose is to ponder what further conflict might mean specifically for war commemoration. We saw during the Vietnam years a withdrawal from commemoration and the unfair alienation of veterans of that war, a tragedy that took another fifteen years to begin to repair. As I suggested, commitment to or enthusiasm for commemoration waxes and

wanes. The Hawke and Howard years fostered fervent war commemoration, seeing new memorials, official pilgrimages and greater government sponsorship and funding of commemoration, emphasising not just or so much the tragedy of the loss of life in war, but the fact of its justification in a national cause. Indeed, the assumption that ‘sacrifice’ in war is the highest duty of citizenship is so engrained in official commemoration that it is neither explicitly stated nor questioned. The proof of how pervasive and influential this was can be seen in the fact that Australia spent not just more per war dead than any other nation during the 2014-18 so-called Centenary of Anzac, but more than *all other nations combined*. This has been exhaustively documented by David Stephens of Honest History.

But since 2001 successive Australian governments have been wary of casualties, fearing the consequences of losses that would formerly have been accepted. But a future war that involves, say, the sinking of one (or all) of Australia’s Aukus submarines – or even the downing of a Chinook carrying 20 diggers – could have effects on how Australians look upon the commemoration of war dead. This is a particular threat given how closely tied commemoration is to expressions of national pride. Past wars can be safely celebrated with waving flags, two-up and footy matches: future wars will surely become an electoral liability.

And as a footnote, the disgraced and now charged Ben Roberts-Smith reminds us that as war criminals from Afghanistan are prosecuted, we may well find that Australians turn from the acceptance of war service, and that popular commemoration suffers another decline: who knows?

Let’s turn from these threats to look at three ways Australian war commemoration might be deepened and enriched, in ways that reflect the realities of Australian history and society.

#### Opportunities: the Australian Wars

One of the most profound changes in Australian history over the past fifty years is that the long ‘Australian silence’ over the violent occupation of this continent is now over. For forty years, essentially since Henry Reynolds published his ground-breaking *The Other Side of the Frontier*, Australians have come to realise and accept that almost everywhere, ‘settlement’ proceeded not peacefully, but by violence. For several decades, we have talked about ‘frontier conflict’, and since Rachel Perkins’s 2023 TV series we have begun to talk about The Australian Wars.

If the great project of twentieth century Australia was nation-building, the most pressing task of this century has been and remains Reconciliation. True reconciliation demands, I think, an honest accounting for and acknowledgement of the past. We have seen an impressive example of this through Victoria’s Yoorook Commission, applying the philosophy of ‘truth and justice’ that brought healing to post-Apartheid South Africa.

A powerful part of Yoorook was the honest acknowledgment of the fact and the impact of racial violence in the colonial period, and its ramifications into the present. I would argue that we need to extend and apply that honesty to the conflicts which saw the conquest of the continent.

I must disclose a strong personal interest here. I'm privileged to be president of a group, Defending Country, which is attempting to help the Australian War Memorial make good on its recent welcome undertakings to recognise and depict the Australian Wars in its museum galleries and ultimately in some form of remembrance – just as it commemorates the 100,000 Australians who died in overseas wars. While the Memorial has belatedly accepted that frontier conflict is a part of Australian military history, it is still proposing to devote just 1% of its expanded floor area to wars which cost perhaps half of all of Australia's deaths in war.

We recognise the sensitivity of this cause – some fear it will sully the idea of Anzac, others that it is a worthy aim, but should be achieved elsewhere. I say, where else should Australian deaths in war be remembered but in the Australian War Memorial?

Doing justice to the memory of all those who died in the Australian Wars may not be easy. Not only might the guardians of the temple of Anzac resist extending commemoration to the wars on which the nation was established, but First Nations people might react with understandable caution. Canberra researcher Rachel Caines, for example, recently published an essay ominously entitled 'This is not a day for you', which argued that Anzac Day was a 'colonial commemoration', from which, she wrote, Indigenous presence had been 'traditionally excluded, hidden or minimised'. Even a seemingly generous acknowledgment might be perceived as patronising or an attempt to suppress Indigenous agency.

#### Opportunities: Ethnic Anzacs

Another of the new approaches to and in Australian military history over the past 25 years or so has been that the ambit of Australian military history has broadened. Military historians still write of campaigns and tactics, generals, but now increasingly incorporate social, cultural and even emotional history, to the point now that a battalion history, say, which neglected its men's reactions in battle – including fear – would be regarded as inadequate.

One of these changes has been that Australian military social historians discovered that the composition of the nation's armed forces was not uniform. While Charles Bean's foundational official histories represented the AIF having been composed of bushmen, later social and demographic research revealed (not surprisingly) that in an increasingly urban nation, its forces were mostly composed of men from the cities.

Other variations in the traditional scope came in discovering that Australia had a black military history. The explosion in Indigenous history soon enough produced several studies of Aborigines in uniform, led by Bob Hall, whose pioneering *Black Diggers* appeared in 1989, followed by Indigenous and non-Indigenous scholars, including Noah Riseman, Alison Cadzow and Joan Beaumont. Doreen Kartinyeri's book on South Australia's *Ngarrindjeri Anzacs* was arguably the first Indigenous study.

Likewise, from the turn of the 20th century, Australian historians began to discover and explore what might be called 'ethnic Anzacs'. Historians such as Elenor Govor, John Williams and Jeff Kildea explored the experiences of Russian, German, and Irish Anzacs, and their example has now been followed by others discovering, interpreting and celebrating

Jewish, Chinese, Greek, Muslim, Serb and Ukrainian service. The only major migrant group not yet accorded a book is, believe it or not, British Anzacs, but I live in hope.

This research and the books it spawned are too often regarded as ‘belonging’ to those communities. Our challenge is to diversify our understanding of the people who have populated Australia’s military history and to incorporate all these experiences into the mainstream. It is no longer possible to assume that Australia’s war dead were born Australian.

Including ‘ethnic Anzacs’ is the easy – after all, they are all ‘Anzacs’ – but they offer a way for migrant communities to find a connection to an Anzac tradition that has too often been seen in a cultural monotone.

#### Opportunities: Other People’s Wars

The third of the opportunities I believe that Australians should adopt if war commemoration is to truly reflect the nation as it is now, is one of the hardest changes for Australians to accept; especially those with a connection to ‘old’, Anglo-Celtic Australia.

We need to appreciate the number of Australians who live with memories of war trauma, and I don’t just mean the relatively few with experience, memories and connection to the ADF personnel who have served in Iraq and Afghanistan this century – they sit squarely within Australian remembrance.

I’m talking about those who have experienced war before they became Australians. I’m no expert, but I did some judicious googling, which offers an impression. Despite persistent and pernicious scare-mongering by right-wing parties and media, Australia welcomes refugees, albeit nowhere near as compassionately as comparable nations in Europe or Scandinavia. Still, in round figures, Australia hosts, in no special order:

50,000 refugees from Sudan or South Sudan.

75,000 Afghans, about a third on humanitarian visas.

85,000 Iranians, many refugees from the Iranian revolution, but many later arrivals, who experienced the decade-long Iran-Iraq war.

10,000 Kurds or Yazidis, many fleeing the conflict which erupted in the wake of the US-led invasion and the fall of Saddam Hussein.

30,000 Ukrainians, about half of whom are on temporary protection visas, virtually all of whom either have direct experience of the Russian invasion or have family still affected by it.

Up to 40,000 refugees from Myanmar, about 5,000 of whom are Rohingya, many victims of the decades-long ethnic strife and repression that has afflicted the former Burma.

6,000 refugees from Congo and continuing conflict in central Africa; and more besides.

And that’s in addition to earlier waves of war migrants, from Hungary, Vietnam, Sri Lanka or Chile. In round figures, then, there are perhaps 200,000 people – there’s that figure again – who are now Australians, many of whom have experienced at least some disruption or

displacement but also perhaps direct trauma in or as a result of conflict. This may range from the anxiety of having loved ones caught up in or lost in conflict to direct individual involvement or injury in war, to having been forced to flee a war zone, being victims of attack or having served as a combatant.

To put this in context, let me remind you that depending on what measures you apply, the world has seen over 250 armed conflicts since 1945, about 40 between UN member states, with about 50 still in progress. (I'm not sure whether this includes the recent attacks by the United States on Venezuela or its and Israel's on Iran.) They've collectively produced about 120 million refugees or displaced persons. Australia has been involved in six of these wars as a combatant and has contributed to over fifty peacekeeping operations at various levels. They may have been what my colleague Peter Londey called 'other people's wars' but in a real sense those wars have become part of the mental and emotional world of a large minority of Australians. As we've seen from the fuel and economic shocks of the past months, globalisation also means that nations not directly involved in conflict cannot be insulated from its effects.

There are living among us, tens of thousands of people who have directly experienced war, and who have found sanctuary in our country. I notice that one of the distinguished speakers who've preceded me at this lectern was Prof Colin McMullin, who twenty years ago spoke on *The Wellbeing of Children Affected by Armed Conflict and Migration*. Some of those children are now Australian adults. What do they feel on 25 April? Do they feel that their experience is understood, or do they feel that Australia's de facto national day has no relevance for them? Accepting that there are several thousand migrants from (say) Sudan who are now Australians, and that many of them remain traumatised by the ordeal of war, either as combatants or as civilians, then arguably ignoring the memories they live with can surely only delay or impair their healing and unduly prolong their disorientation and even disorder.

This is a conversation Australians, new and old, need to have. It requires trust on both sides: a willingness on the part of Australians to accept that migrants (and especially refugees) cannot always or easily 'leave that stuff behind'; and a willingness on the part of migrants to accept the validity of Australia's desire to remember; even when what it is remembering are the dead of wars long ago; and, to be honest, wars that (the Australian Wars and the Great War aside) did not leave profound legacies or physical scars; not ones which persist for generations. But while no one can now actually remember the Great War and hardly anyone affected by it, there are many Australians who live with a personal memory of war still.

### Conclusion

While the changes I propose might challenge, they need not be seen as threatening. What, after all, is there to be afraid of?

I'm not trying to diminish Anzac (however much I might lament the more egregious distortions of it). I've devoted my career to telling stories of Australia's wars and why they matter. But I'm increasingly conscious that most of the stories I've told are relevant to only some Australians. What I'm proposing this evening can only enhance our sense of connection.

I'm arguing that commemoration, like the sense of community or, indeed, parental love, is not a zero-sum game – it's a cut-and-come-again magic pudding: hence my title. Norman Lindsay's classic children's book was published in 1918, towards the end of a long war in which he'd shown himself to be a pliant tool of official propaganda – the notorious 'Hun' poster of 1918 is his work too. But Lindsay's metaphor of Albert, the endlessly giving (if chronically disgruntled) pudding exemplifies how we should consider the commemoration of war in Australia. There's enough in it for us all.

At times different groups of Australians will and should come together in remembrance. For example, Anzac Day has, obviously, always been shared with New Zealanders. But 'Turkish Australians' have for thirty years participated in ceremonies on 25 April (unfortunately propagating the bogus 'Ataturk quotation' that Honest History has thoroughly debunked). Recently, Sikh Australians have begun to join Anzac Day marches, reminding us that Indian troops came ashore alongside the Anzacs on 25 April 1915. Marches and vigils remembering the dead of the Australian Wars continue, and even the Australian War Memorial is gradually and, it has to be said, grudgingly moving to accept that they form part of Australia's military history, even if it remains the bastion of Anzackery, one that may not seek terms without a long siege.

But it is clear that Australian society is changing, not always easily or without stress. I would argue that those most uneasy about multiculturalism are unfortunately also often those least inclined to share the pudding of war remembrance. This is a great pity. Respectful and authentic commemoration expands to meet the need for it, reinforcing the tolerance that is at the heart of a civil society and contributing to the 'social cohesion' for which we strive, often at cross-purposes. If we were to compassionately expand the ambit of commemoration to embrace the memory of frontier conflict, of other-than 'old' Australia and especially those who have found Australia a refuge from the horrors of war, we would perhaps see a more compassionate, tolerant, cohesive society emerge from the recognition of the collective and individual trauma of war.

Of course I foresee argument over the changes I'm advocating: good! Those who persist in believing that acknowledging the Australian Wars somehow denigrates respect for Anzac may need to be informed of the facts and the justification. Christians – and this point is of particular relevance to this gathering – may be challenged to accept different forms of remembrance, and different faiths. Likewise, those who believe that 'migrants' simply need to accept the secular creed of Anzac as proof of their 'Australianness' will need to find the generosity to share war remembrance, often with people whose experience and memory of war is much sharper and more recent than 1915 or 1941. Actually, I'm more confident that Christians may be more amenable to change. While different denominations and faiths move at different speeds, the tide of ecumenism and inter-faith dialogue, so vital in our conflicted world, has become such a part of our lives that we may hope to see those changes first.

What can guide us in considering and (I hope) avoiding or accepting these threats and changes? I suggest that the values that the Effective Living Centre espouses and embodies give us a workable way to assess them.

The Centre's values comprise: Respect, Compassion, Inclusion, Fairness, Integrity, and Community. Each one of these can help us to consider and perhaps adopt the sorts of changes I'm proposing: and that discussion can begin now.

Ladies and gentlemen, thank you for your attention. I look forward to your questions and reactions.