Anzac: Celebration or Commemoration?

Gareth Knapman
also thinks that 'the elasticity of the myth, or, as I would prefer to call it, the legend of Gallipoli (these are the doings of actual men we are talking about) will confound the manipulators'.

The debate continues, as does the related contention over whether warfare between black and white should be represented in our public monuments and ceremonies. New and under-explored themes emerge in polemical and reflective writing. Marina Larsson examines the consequences of war for the kin of damaged survivors. Alistair Thomson revisits the history of his own family in the cause of discovering how Australians remember, forget, invent and imagine their experience of war. Carolyn Holbrook places Anzac in the history of ideas, charting the ebb and flow of public and private remembrance. Christina Twomey shows how the language of trauma has given perceptions of Anzac a new resonance, 'a point of entry for empathetic identification' which 'placed emotion and affect at the very centre of Anzac commemorative practices, reinvigorating them for a new era'. James Brown finds governments more attentive to soldiers long dead than to living ones, and argues that nostalgia for old battles is impeding clear thinking about current and prospective warfare. Peter Stanley is transforming our understanding of issue after issue, military and civil. The community of scholars interested in Anzac continues to expand.

When I began to write about Anzac Day more than fifty years ago it was difficult to imagine that a conversation about its symbolism and significance would continue for another fifty years. What students of history make of my reflections on my retrospective of fifty years is impossible to imagine. Inasmuch as the commemoration of 25 April 1915 prompts a discussion about what it means to be Australian, that seems to me a good thing regardless of when it happens.

ANZAC: CELEBRATION OR COMMEMORATION?

GARETH KNAPMAN

Australia's initial experience in the Great War was success. The military campaign in German New Guinea from September to November 1914 was overwhelmingly effective with few casualties. Similarly, the newly formed Royal Australian Navy (RAN) had a major victory in the international spotlight in November 1914 when HMAS Sydney defeated the German light cruiser SMS Emden. The first eight months of the war were characterised by small sacrifice and moderate effort. Military and financial commitments were relatively small; the nation was certainly not engaged in a total war that depleted its lifeblood. The war was popular and the country experienced jubilation.

News of substantial casualties from the Gallipoli landings did not reach the public until 6 May 1915. Even so these casualties were relatively minor, with only 111 reported. While a further 1805 soldiers were killed in action and an additional 469 died of their wounds in May, these figures were not beyond expectation. In comparison, the newspapers reported tens of thousands
of Turkish casualties. Australia's experience by mid-1915 was continual victories and, from the distant gaze of Australian newspapers in May and June 1915, even the Gallipoli campaign appeared to be a sure victory.

Of course things turned out differently. The first anniversary of the initial landings in Turkey was marked publicly in both Australia and Britain on 25 April 1916. Historian Eric Andrews argues that the British authorities orchestrated the commemoration as part of an astute and cynical propaganda exercise in the wake of crushing defeat in the Dardanelles campaign. The idea that Anzac Day originated in Britain and flowed to Australia in a process Andrews labels as 'spontaneity', is undermined by the careful analysis of John Moses concerning Canon David Garland's campaigning in Queensland for a solemn day of commemoration which is featured in the next chapter. Garland's focus on commemoration was in fact a consciously reactionary response to the celebratory events throughout 1915 that echoed the pre-war celebrations of national identity.

Most commentators fail to notice this contest of ideas and aspirations over whether Anzac Day should be celebrated or commemorated. But three distinct traditions lie behind the development of Anzac Day during the Great War, all of which address the idea of a national day. Anzac Day merged these traditions, to create a national day with multiple aspects serving different needs.

The first tradition was the celebratory response to armed conflict. This was important for morale during the Great War. In the postwar period it became part of the national reinterpretation of Australian identity. The second tradition originated with the Labor Day union movement marches of the nineteenth century. Labor Day was a national holiday before 1914 celebrating Australia's social democratic progress. The third tradition was the

sombre religious commemoration pioneered by Canon Garland, essentially a reaction to the others. Together these three traditions represented a contest of ideas during the war years over how Australians should remember and honour the war dead. Was it to be celebration or commemoration?

**Australia Day in 1915**

Australians were certainly aware of carnage on the Western Front and the tremendous loss of life that European nations were experiencing. Newspapers continually reported the destruction wrought on civilians in Belgium and France. And while these losses were distant and predominately affected other people, Australians demonstrated a desire to help their suffering European allies. A raft of patriotic and welfare funds emerged in the first year of the Great War. These included the Belgian Relief Fund, the Lord Mayor's Patriotic Fund, the Australian Red Cross Society, Lady Stanley's Wounded Soldiers Appeal, Lady Mayoress' Patriotic Fund, French Red Cross and Relief Funds, the Serbian Appeal, the Polish Appeal, Purple Cross Fund, YMCA Appeal and the Ambulance Appeal. The funds were divided between those addressing subjected overseas populations and others addressing the welfare of Australian troops. Nevertheless the Argus newspaper reported that the 'multiplicity of appeals' caused public confusion and 'people hesitated to contribute'.

In late 1914 and during the first months of 1915, these funds operated with mere calls for donations. Organisers soon realised that a better way to raise money was to combine patriotic displays with some form of carnival. By March 1915, newspapers reported specific fundraising days such as 'Belgian Day', held in Melbourne on Friday 16 March, when people were encouraged
to carry flags and patriotic emblems, and to attend a concert held in Collins Street. New South Wales responded with its own ‘Belgian Day’ on 14 May, and went further than Melbourne by attempting to coordinate activities across the state, asking every town and hamlet ... to participate. An emerging trend of focused fundraising days that connected carnivals to patriotism in a celebratory atmosphere, saw different states compete with each other over who could promote the bigger patriotic display.

On 26 May 1915, a month after the Gallipoli landings, the Red Cross organised a public meeting at the Sydney Town Hall to discuss caring for returning wounded men. The ‘Belgian Fund’ committee agreed to build on their previous experience with patriotic fundraising and coordinate efforts to raise funds for the wounded. The New South Wales Premier, William Holman, was soon convinced of the importance of such efforts. Two days later he telegrammed the Victorian and South Australian premiers, proposing a ‘big united effort to raise funds throughout the States for benefit wounded Australian soldiers and general Red Cross purposes’, asking them, ‘can we count upon your cooperation?’

Throughout June, fundraising connected to national celebration centred on returned servicemen and Australian identity became prominent. The premiers decided to create ‘Australia Day’ and to make it bigger than previous efforts.

The initial idea was to hold ‘Australia Day’ on 4 August, which marked one year since hostilities commenced. Since 4 August fell on a Wednesday, Premier Holman proposed moving the day to a Friday to fit in with late night shopping in New South Wales. After a series of telegrams between the states, all sides settled on Friday 30 July. Holman’s insistence that Australia Day coincide with late night shopping, demonstrated the connection between shopping and fundraising. The fundraising days of 1915 brought people into the shopping districts while the extension of shopping hours made the fundraising days more attractive. They combined consumerism and patriotic entertainment, while raising funds through donations and the purchase of badges and tokens. Businesses saw the commercial potential of these days. In Adelaide the ‘Gouger Street Traders Association’ was created to ‘see what could be done by them to help the funds on Australia day.’

Unashamedly, the new association connected patriotism to their commercial self-interest declaring their association aimed to take part in any movement that is set on foot for the benefit of any charitable institution or any scheme that is in the interests of the public, and incidentally to bring Gouger Street before the public eye as a thoroughfare that is of importance to the community.

‘Australia Day’ connected with deeper currents of identity. In Melbourne, the day consisted of a procession terminating at Parliament House. The Victorian Artists Society organised a pageant with various floats on key groups in Australian history. These floats reflected particularly on Victorian history – they included floats devoted to pioneers, miners and the Ned Kelly bushranger gang. In Sydney, the march was limited to new AIF recruits, followed by bands and street entertainers. In Adelaide, Boy Scouts and a collection of school children led the procession followed by the Naval Reserve Brigade and new AIF recruits. It also included a contingent of ‘old veterans’, the Fire Brigade, university students as well as various clubs and associations.

The political leadership and the newspapers struggled to find the real meaning of ‘Australia Day’. The Governor-General, Sir Ronald Munro Ferguson, had no idea what to make of it. He ignored the wider national sentiments of identity and decided
on a recruitment drive, saying: ‘every available man who loves his country, who is loyal to his race, and who venerates its traditions, should join the colours’. Prime Minister Andrew Fisher dedicated the day to ‘mercy in memory and in honour of our heroic sons’. The opposition leader, Joseph Cook based his message on that of the Red Cross proposing that ‘Australia Day embodies’ the qualities of ‘sacrifice, self-denial, and world-wide human sympathy’ and a call for the continual struggle for a ‘free Australia’.12 Coordinated across three states, ‘Australia Day’ was the biggest fundraising day yet held. In Adelaide the streets were ‘thronged with enthusiastic crowds, who eagerly patronised the stalls’.13 The day was a financial success. Street collections raised £3,000 in Adelaide while in Melbourne the figure was £12,800 and in Sydney £28,470.14 Pageantry demonstrated its financial viability with tens of thousands of pounds being raised for returned servicemen and a new model for future fundraising days. ‘Australia Day’ demonstrated how patriotism could be directed towards heroic veterans while carrying a public message with humanitarian concern.

Labor Day
Fundraisers in South Australia, looking to capitalise on the successes of the ‘Australia Day’ event, began proposing new initiatives that combined pageantry and shopping with fundraising. The South Australian Governor, Sir Henry Galloway, suggested that the Broken Hill Australia Day Pageant visit Adelaide at the government’s expense. Wanting to dodge the cost of the initiative, Premier Crawford Vaughn responded that although a wonderful idea, the promoters and fundraising committees should cover the costs.15 Despite his reticence to spend public money, Vaughn saw the importance of the initiatives and chaired a meeting of the Australia Day Fund on 23 August 1915, to assess the achievements of the Australia Day carnival. The committee proposed a new mega-carnival in aid of wounded soldiers which was a mixture of a trade expo, community celebrations and tourism drawcard:

The carnival could run for a week, and they could attract people from all the other States and New Zealand … By organising, on business lines, they could run band and other competitions, and land and aquatic sports. The manufacturers of the State would join in and the shopkeepers would come forward and give their assistance.16

Although this mega-carnival never eventuated, the discussion demonstrates how fundraising for returned soldiers was packaged as part of a broader movement spanning nationalist sentiments and consumerism.

On 19 August, William Melbourne sensed an opportunity to exploit the desire for patriotic carnivals in the wake of the Australia Day success. Melbourne was the rotating president of the Eight Hours Day committee which was responsible for organising Labor Day festivities in South Australia. He was also the President of the Typographical Association and a leading unionist and Labor man in South Australia. Melbourne had long wanted to highlight the Labor movement’s commitment to the British Empire and the war. When news of the first Gallipoli casualties reached Australia on 6 May, he urged the Eight Hours Day committee to:

place on record its admiration of the splendid services rendered to the Empire by the Australian troops in the Dardanelles, and [its] desires to express its deep sympathy

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with the relations of those who died in the defence of truth and justice. It was seconded and carried.17

Encouraged by talk of a mega-carnival, Melbourne took the initiative and met with Alfred Styles, Chief Secretary to the South Australian Government, on 26 August 1915. Styles' involvement was important. Only two days earlier he had rejected a request by the South Australian Musicians' Union to conduct a patriotic concert on a Sunday. When questioned, Styles responded that it is 'the policy of the government to discourage Sunday concerts'.18 Between Vaughn's refusal to fund the Broken Hill pageant and Styles' rejection of the musicians' union, the government was sending mixed messages about its support for patriotic endeavours.

In the week between revealing his intentions to the Eight Hours Day committee and his meeting with Styles, Melbourne conducted extensive negotiations with commercial and non-Labor groups. When he met with Styles, Melbourne had already gained in-principle support to unite with the 'Art Union', 'Shopkeepers Defence League' and the 'Wounded Soldiers Committee' to bring Broken Hill's Australia Day pageant to Adelaide and to form a new committee. These negotiations were not popular within the union movement, but Melbourne used his majority numbers on the Eight Hours Day committee to overcome opposition to his changes and to remove the committee's power to organise Labor Day commemorations for 1915.19 He then went out of his way to specify that the event would not be 'a trade union display', saying he would hand over chairmanship of the committee to Styles. Styles then invited 'prominent ladies and gentlemen to join the new Anzac Day committee' thereby legitimising Melbourne's lobbying of different non-union organisations the previous week.20 The Gouger Street Traders' Association, which had formed as a response to Australia Day, threw their support behind the Anzac Day initiative, suggesting that the parade proceed through Gouger Street.

Melbourne and Styles initially called their new committee 'the Monster Procession, Pageant, and Carnival', but agreed on the name Anzac Day after making public appeals for a more suitable name.21 The nature of the appeal for names is unclear from surviving records but numerous submissions had proposed 'Anzac Day'. After drawing 'lots', attribution for the name 'Anzac Day' was given to Robert Wheeler.22 The new Anzac Day committee aimed to exceed the success of Australia Day.23

The Eight Hours Day (Labor Day) celebration on 13 October 1915 was already a public holiday in South Australia, traditionally marked by a 'pageant' and 'celebrations'.24 The significance of the first Anzac Day being held in conjunction with Eight Hours Day cannot be understated. In the early twentieth century, Labor Day had major symbolic social importance. In 1913, an editorial in the Register, a conservative South Australian paper, explained the day 'has its story. It has its national significance. Eight Hours Day did not "just happen". It evolved in sharp definition from the ideals of the democracy'.25 The Advertiser also emphasised the symbolic importance of the day:

Australia should be proud of its Eight Hours Day. This pageant of Labor is an outward and visible sign, almost, one might say, an emphatic declaration of Australia's democracy. The holiday in all its implications is typically Australian.26

These sentiments from 1913 express the importance of Labor Day to the development of the Australian identity. But they share similarities with the way people referred to Anzac Day in the
aftermath of the Great War. For Australians in 1913, Labor Day was a unifying compact between classes. It emanated from a protracted struggle in which the world remembers the importance of Australia. The Register's editorial takes the unifying theme to a deeper level calling it a 'thanksgiving': 'It is not merely political this glorification of a people's daily manual and mental accomplishment. It is more than a holiday. It is a thanksgiving day. Few people are there who from choice would flout the celebration of a fair day's toil'. Newspapers before the Great War -- both conservative or Labor -- looked on Labor Day as a sacred day. These accounts share a strong similarity to the intent of later mythologisers of Anzac Day. Both looked to forging a sacred day marking the birth of the nation.

Although we can make meta-connections between the symbolism of competing national days, the analogy between Eight Hours Day (Labor Day) and Anzac Day is made more direct in Adelaide because the Eight Hours Day became Anzac Day. The sacredness of Eight Hours Day was blended with the emerging character of Anzac. The daily papers preserve the link for posterity. The Advertiser proclaimed that the workers' day 'to celebrate the democratic boom of an Eight Hours Day has naturally risen to the general scale of patriotism' and despite the 'maelstrom of horror and death' the war 'has been unifying in its effects'. The article went on to proclaim that the 'unifying effects' were nothing less than a blood sacrifice for liberty and the Australian nation:

Class interests have been reduced ... defend the sacred rights of liberty and justice ... [and the] son of the rich man has clasped, in the wonderful ties of a comradeship of life and death, the hand of the worker. With shoulders touching they have leapt exultingly to the heights of glory, with their life blood mingling they have fallen, the faults of both erased by the supreme sacrifice.

The Advertiser's focus on unity through shared loss of life insinuates an underlying class tension over the Labor Day public holiday. In comparison, the Register was more direct in attacking the union movement:

In the ordinary course of events this would be Eight Hours Day, and that also is a composite in a certain sense, for the eight hours' system was a result of amicable arrangements between employers and employed ... In later years, however, Eight Hours Day has usually been styled Labor Day, to indicate that it is a wage-receivers' more than a wage-payers' day.

For the writer of the Register's editorial, Labor Day had clearly become a partisan issue. In an attack on organised Labor, the writer declared 'at the trenches there is no question of employers or employed, any more than there is any question of eight hours' work, eight hours' play, eight hours' sleep, and eight bob a day. Master (if the use of that term be still permissible) and man fight and die together'. The theme of unity through shared sacrifice speaks to an underlying tension between the Labor movement and commercial and industrial interests.

There was clear support in the press for a national holiday focused on shared sacrifice in war. These early South Australian advocates identified many of the later tropes surrounding Anzac Day, such as 'birth of the nation', 'sacrifice' and 'they died for democracy/freedom'. The 1915 newspaper columns link Anzac Day to democracy through the murky notion that the Great War was fought to defend democracy and by grounding the
wartime experience in the Australian industrial agreements of the early twentieth century. Most importantly, these early myth-makers were hawking the idea that the nation is born out of blood, and that Anzac provided the shared identity that Australia needed.

The ‘first’ Anzac Day and its aftermath

The union procession was the central commemorative activity of Eight Hours Day. It began its life in the nineteenth century as a demonstration of industrial strength, but morphed into a sacred display of unionism and social democracy. The procession had its own sacred relics, principally the ‘clasped hands’ banner that led it. An observer of the prewar 1913 Labor Day march commented ‘the workers wore their trade badges with as good a grace as a soldier might be expected to wear the Victoria Cross’. The day also commemorated the veterans of the Labor movement. The ‘pioneers’ of the eight-hour day had their own special wagon giving them a place of pride and importance, much like the reverence reserved for the Great War veterans who still participated in Anzac Day marches in the 1990s. The union movement had long since drawn inspiration for its regalia from the military. Its trade banners, sashes, badges and organised marches all emulated nineteenth-century military organisation and ceremonial display.

Heading the march was the RAN Brigade marching with fixed bayonets accompanied by the Brigade Band. The emotional centrepiece of the march came next: wounded soldiers from Gallipoli. Following the Anzacs was the traditional union march, although it was unique for this particular Anzac/Eight Hours Day. At the vanguard of the union procession was the ‘Women Employees’ Mutual Association and the Government Women Workers’ which observers at the time saw as indicative of the social changes produced by the war. Separating the female unions from the main body of trades was the ‘troop of mounted ladies’, promoted as a popular ‘diversion’. Following the ‘mounted ladies’ was a series of trade-orientated floats, bands and fundraising endeavours that extended for two miles. Many of the floats had a Gallipoli theme such as the ‘Operative Painters and Decorative Employees of Australia’, which hosted a background painting of Gallipoli’s hills with the painters dressed as soldiers occupying the foreground, at the ready to clamber-up the painted escarpment. Displays of imperial patriotism were also a facet of the day with numerous floats representing historic heroes of the British Empire and imperial mascots such as John Bull and Britannia. Another float consisted of a giant effigy of the Kaiser skewered with a sword. The banner read ‘The Kaiser wants copper, hit him with some’. The purpose of these floats was to raise money with patrons hurling pennies at the different floats.

After the parade, the celebrations moved to the Adelaide Oval and turned into a carnival. Circling the oval was a group of people dressed as prehistoric animals being chased by cave men. For weeks, the papers had covered the build-up for Anzac Day, particularly the preparations for the ‘tram-car crash’. Described as an ‘American novelty’, the highly choreographed event reportedly attracted a 15,000-strong crowd. Two obsolete horse-drawn trams were mounted on a track raised at both ends. With gravity powering the trams to a speed of 16 miles per hour, the impact of the collision was made more impressive with timed explosions bursting the wreck into flames on the moment of impact. An eyewitness described ‘watching two trams melt into a shapeless mass of twisted iron and splintered wood. The flames completed the total destruction’. Other headline events included a display
of air balloons and military kites (the precursors to the aeroplane). There was also a mock arrest of cabinet members from the South Australian Government who pretended to be common thieves. These events were popular and the 15,000 strong crowd responded rapturously. The organisers, politicians and newspaper columnists believed a serious act of commemoration and identity was created alongside the frivolity and fun.

The organisers of Anzac Day in South Australia emphasised a level of national importance and attempted to make the day stand out from other fundraising days. As part of this endeavour, the organisers for Anzac Day solicited messages from the Governor-General, Sir Ronald Munro-Ferguson, and the Governor of South Australia, Sir Henry Galloway. Munro was the first to cable his message with a simple note: As with his insipid Australia Day message, he failed to grasp the importance of the day to the South Australian people: 'Hope your Anzac Day will be as successful as previous efforts organized and supported by the generous people of South Australia'. Munro saw the day merely as a fundraising endeavour. The following year when the viceroy again failed to sense the gravity of Anzac Day, he was widely criticised for not capturing the commemorative mood more vividly.

In comparison to Munro, Galloway, the Governor of South Australia, displayed a real understanding of the emerging profundity and national narrative of Anzac and the idea of Anzac Day. Galloway began by acknowledging Anzac Day as a 'memorable occasion in the history of South Australia'. He claimed that the 'valor and achievements in battle' of those who saw action in Turkey 'will be household words throughout the Empire for all time, and I bow my head in respect to the glorious memory of our heroic dead whose epitaphs are engraved on the hearts of a proud and grateful people'. In the Governor's words, the link between official patriotism and the honouring of the wounded as a sacred act is becoming more evident. Unlike the Governor-General and the Governor, who forwarded their messages to the Organising Committee, Prime Minister Andrew Fisher emphasised the political importance of the day, forwarding his message directly to the Premier of South Australia on the morning of Anzac Day:

I am glad to send a message as Anzac Day begins. It is well known that our brave soldiers, who voluntarily face danger and death for Australia's honour and our safety, have been cheered by the news, that those left behind appreciate their action, and feel it an honour to raise funds to minister to their comfort. I trust South Australia will to-day respond in a noble way in recognition of what we owe the gallant boys who have made the name of Australia famous the world over.

Fisher's message reflected much of the rhetoric of patriotism, sacrifice and freedom that became standard sentiments in later Anzac Days. His message also suggests an emerging awareness that the idea of an Anzac Day would spread well beyond South Australia.

Major newspapers throughout the country reported the events in Adelaide: 'This year the Eight Hours Day committee sacrificed the identity of its celebration by conducting a carnival in aid of the Wounded Soldiers' Fund'. Importantly, each account was headed 'Anzac Day' and by explaining this patriotic 'day was observed as Anzac Day', the idea of Anzac Day was promoted among the broader Australian public. The nationally circulated Illustrated Australian included a half page spread; the Illustrated Adelaide Chronicle had a full page spread of images from Anzac Day.
The fundraising endeavour of Anzac Day was impressive: raising over £4,000 – one thousand more than Australia Day in South Australia. National and regional newspapers reported the success across the country. In Victoria, the Lord Mayor’s Button Day committee merged with the Victorian Artists Society to host ‘Anzac Remembrance Day’ on 17 December 1915. Although formally named ‘Remembrance Day’, newspaper reports increasingly labelled the occasion ‘Anzac Remembrance Day’, particularly in rural Victoria and interstate. The regional city of Ballarat decided to host the fundraising day on 14 January 1916 instead and distinctively called it ‘Anzac Day’ and not ‘Anzac Remembrance Day’. These Victorian Anzac Days were also built around the idea of a carnival. The Commonwealth Button Fund produced 250,000 button-badges (the precursor to the Anzac Day badge) to sell on the day. The Argus newspaper reported that a large army of honorary assistants, had resulted in the preparation of a most comprehensive list of attractions, which, at almost every street corner, seemed to draw the money from one’s pocket as a magnet attracts iron fillings. The procession was even more bizarre than the Australia Day procession in Melbourne and the Anzac Day procession in Adelaide. Clarence Webber, a fitness guru and wrestling champion, led the procession dressed as a Nordic war god followed by Helen Hope dressed as the Goddess of Peace. The returned wounded marched and were supported by groups of people dressed as Native Americans while the Melbourne Gollywog Club rode motorcycles.

Despite their pageantry, the Anzac Days of 1915 were all committed to helping the wounded and honouring those who served. The great unstated truth was the importance of commemorating the dead. The events in Adelaide and Melbourne focus on the living and the future. There was no serious reflection on the past or the personal cost of war.

### Anzac Day and the struggle for solemnity

The idea of Anzac Day began to change after the evacuation of Australian and allied troops from Gallipoli in December 1915. December certainly marked a transition, as Anzac became a moment in history to be recorded and made the subject of continuing reflection. The shift in focus to memory occurred almost naturally throughout Australia and created a conflict between two competing methods: celebration or commemoration. Once the context changed co-existence became difficult. The editor of the Euroa Advertiser observed the changing mood while assessing the December Anzac Remembrance Day commemorations in Victoria. He noted that:

> While Australians were celebrating ‘Anzac Remembrance Day’ this and last week, and had been assured by cables that the forces were to be retained at Gallipoli no one had the slightest suspicion that our celebrations were literally truly named-that, even then, Anzac and Suvla Bay ... were but a memory of the great war.

With the events of Anzac being transferred to memory, a public meeting was called in Queensland on 10 January 1916. This meeting was organised by the state’s political leadership: Alderman Down, the Mayor of Brisbane; His Excellency, Sir John Hamilton Goold-Adams, the Governor of Queensland; the Honourable Thomas Joseph Ryan, the Premier of Queensland; Major-General James McCay, the Inspector-General of Australian Imperial Forces; and Chaplain David Garland. The meeting decided that the Anzac dead would be mourned and remembered. The meeting resolved to make 25 April 1916 a day of commemoration throughout the country that would be called...
'Anzac Day'. A new organisation was formed – the Anzac Day Commemoration Committee (ADCC). Garland became the secretary.

Garland took the initiative in developing a national coordination that focused on commemoration rather than celebration. Garland and the ADCC chose to make the radical shift, relegating the work of fundraising. Garland wrote to the southern states declaring that 'no effort should be made to raise funds nor should prominence be given to the collecting or raising of funds'. Any attempt to raise funds, Garland argued, promoted an environment of celebration. He stipulated to the southern states that 'It will be noted that so far as Queensland is concerned, the Day is to be kept with solemnity and with avoidance of anything approaching jubilation or carnival'. Queensland banned trinket sales on Anzac Day with only one official Anzac Day badge being issued – almost as an afterthought – and all funds devoted to the 'care of graves in Gallipoli'. With the graves in enemy hands for the foreseeable future, this was not an immediate concern and in stark contrast to the fundraising concerns of southern states in 1915. The actions of the Commemoration Committee stressed that Anzac Day would be special. Its focus would be devotion to the memory of the fallen rather than the plight of the living.

The austerity of the Queensland approach caused consternation in the southern states. Preparations in Queensland were not generally reported in Victoria until March. The Victorian Premier, Alexander Peacock, had been adamant that there 'should be no State celebration of Anzac Day' and that any celebrations should be a local government decision and initiative. Peacock's reluctance to get involved meant the onus to organise events fell on the fundraising groups. These fundraising groups organised Anzac Day activities that focused on fundraising through pageantry and celebration. They committed themselves to selling 300,000 Anzac Day badges. The carnival atmosphere continued in Victoria.

In Sydney, the meaning of Anzac Day was strongly contested. The Citizen's War Chest fund decided that the 25 April was 'too sacred' to hold a 'carnival' but still issued an emblematic badge to raise funds. The New South Wales Government issued an edict to 'decorate all its public buildings'. As a response to the government's direction, the Lord Mayor recommended 'illuminating' the 'town hall and Queen Victoria Markets' and pledging £1,000 for the celebrations. This provoked an instant public reaction against the alleged extravagance of the Lord Mayor's celebrations. The letters page of the Sydney Morning Herald was ablaze with the fury of bereaved family members. Most were aghast at the waste of public money at a time when the government was failing to deliver vital public services. One correspondent, 'JL', wrote: 'As the wife of a working man and the mother of a soldier boy, I would raise my voice in protest against such a wicked waste of public money'. Another, writing under the nom de plume of 'Commerce', wrote 'while many of the Empire's leaders are preaching economy it is scandalous that many are still practising extravagance'. Another correspondent, CL Doherty, wrote 'if £1000 must go bang, in the name of our new nationhood ... let it be devoted to something practical - i.e. the amelioration in some degree of the sufferings of the wounded men themselves, or the dependents of those who are gone, whose changed lives and saddened homes are the inevitable outcome of the sacrifice'. Spending £1,000 on what many saw as nationalistic celebrations was deliberately distasteful if not gravely ill-timed.

The focus of objection, particularly from grieving families, was the idea of celebration. One writer maintained the 'the public in the main are dreadfully against fireworks just now', while Linda Littlejohn wrote that 'it is quite evident that neither
the Lord Mayor nor those who supported his motion have sacrificed anyone near and dear to them at that memorable landing.' Others expressed similar sentiments. Rather than a day of nationalistic jubilation, Elspeth wrote the day should be 'set aside as a day of humiliation and prayer in memory'. The public plainly had a very different view of Anzac Day to their elected representatives. Littlejohn likened it to an anniversary of a funeral: 'even happy-go-luck Australians are not accustomed to celebrate the first anniversary of a death in the family with jubilation'.

Although the Lord Mayor of Sydney received the brunt of the backlash over the lighting issue, the initiative was actually at the request of the Returned Soldiers Association (RSA). The younger RSA members quickly responded. In an indignant letter to the editor, Corporal GF Davis, took ownership of Anzac Day for veterans. He declared: 'In the first place this is, at the back of everything, a soldier's movement' and 'why should these ladies, who are busy about a comfort's fund, object to our doing something for the Empire, and something to keep green the memory of dead men who were our personal friends?'. ‘A Grieving Father’ responded to the Davis letter. He noted that ‘illuminations and gaiety usually go together, and surely this is no day for gaiety. We who have sent and lost our sons are entitled to ask that nothing bordering on jubilation should take place on this sad but great anniversary’.

The RSA veterans in 1916 were predominantly young men. The wanted a celebration to forget the war and to mark the fact they were alive and not dead. Davis was particularly indignant about the change in public attitudes on the fundraising emphasis of the days:

There is no talk about 'wasting money' when the Belgians or the Serbians or the Poles are to benefit. But on Anzac

Day we are not going in for the costly decorations and money-making schemes that characterised Belgian Day and Australia Day. All that the city has been asked to give is £1000 for lighting. Do your correspondents mean that they grudge us this?

From the RSA's perspective, the aggrieved parents complaining about frivolity and the waste of public monies, were begrudging the wishes of returned soldiers who had sacrificed so much. Despite the controversy, the public complaints did not alter the plans to illuminate the Sydney Town Hall. Nevertheless a broad consensus was developing that more solemnity was needed. An editorial in the Sydney Irish Catholic Freeman's Journal expressed disgust at the frivolity of the home front:

Anzac Day – and yet money thrown away everywhere in ephemeral enjoyment! The shadow of death in thousands of homes – and yet almost record gatherings at show and races and theatres and the various pleasure resorts?

The debate in Sydney demonstrated two things: first, that the celebratory feeling of 1915 was starting to disappear; and, second, that raising money around commemoration had become a sensitive issue. The major distinction between 1915 and 1916 was the knowledge that the Gallipoli campaign had cost the lives of over 8,000 Australian men and was a total failure. The year 1915 was one of relative innocence. The war had little tangible effect on the bulk of the population. People readily gave money to various causes but demanded entertainment as the fee for their charity. By April 1916, the tone had changed. The pageantry of 1915 appeared frivolous and disrespectful in some quarters. The response of the RSA to demands that they drop
their decision to celebrate Anzac Day with a late night party at Town Hall revealed that Anzac Day had become a public possession that needed to accommodate multiple voices. The occasion demanded solemn commemoration for the aggrieved families and it also needed to serve the veterans who wanted their contributions recognised. As young men, they wanted to celebrate what they had achieved. They were not victims — they were survivors.

Conclusions

The first anniversary of Anzac Day had its origins in the prequel Anzac Days and commemorative days of 1915. Three different traditions existed in 1916 and influenced how Anzac Day would be subsequently marked. Celebration was the most prominent tradition of 1915. In response to the celebratory mood, a movement developed in Queensland insisting on solemn commemoration. Thereafter, Anzac Day has contained a tension between commemoration and celebration, with continual displeasure by advocates of commemoration towards the displays of celebration through the consumption of alcohol and gambling. In previous decades the tension was resolved by devoting the morning to commemoration and the afternoons to celebration.

Although the traditions of celebration and commemoration were important to those who promoted them, they also drew on the need for a national day that acknowledged and honoured Australia and Australian achievements — this is the third tradition. Before the Great War, people focused on Labor Day or Eight Hours Day as a symbol of Australian democracy and development. Anzac Day drew on the ceremonial traditions of the Labor Day marches and co-opted its rhetoric. From 1916, Anzac Day was connected to the cause of fighting for democracy and equality. Anzac Day was about remembering sacrifice for democracy. Conservatives and unionists used these same words in the early twentieth century to give Labor Day meaning. Plainly, Anzac Day had the capacity both to unite and divide. It still does.