Australians and New Zealanders commemorated Anzac Day on 25 April 2013, paying tribute to diggers (soldiers) who lost their lives at the Turkish front 98 years ago. The tribute commenced with dawn services and marches across Australia and New Zealand. Those who lost their lives in subsequent wars were also remembered. A resident of the Blue Mountains, Sydney, Michael Adams, said, ‘My father was in World War II in New Guinea and my great grandfather was killed over in France in 1917 so I come here every year to honour them, as well as remember those who have been left behind.’ South Australian Veterans director Bill Denny said that about 300,000 Australians have died in 51 conflicts from 1868 to the present day. Tim Barrett, Commander Australian Fleet, remembered the 3000 veterans who are ‘currently serving with great distinction overseas from South Sudan, Egypt to the Middle East, Afghanistan, in the Southeast Asian region and the South Pacific’. Overseas, at Anzac Cove in Gallipoli, Turkey, many Australians also gathered (as they do every year on Anzac Day) to pay their respects to their lost loved ones.

As I reflected on the Anzac Day commemorations, I envisaged the complexities of war. I returned to my previous research, which has touched on three relevant dimensions of

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Australian soldiers’ sacrifice

During World War 1, which dragged bloodily on for more than four years (1914–1918), about 417,000 Australians enlisted, which included 40 per cent of all males in Australia between 18 and 45 years, and some 330,000 saw service overseas. More than 60,000 were killed and more than 155,000 were wounded, 16,000 being victims of poison gas, and more than 3000 became prisoners of war. Some 398,000 cases were reported of war-related illness, injuries and deaths. All this occurred in a society of under 5,000,000 people.

At the Gallipoli campaign, about 8,709 Australians were killed and 28,000 were injured. More than 2,700 New Zealanders, 21,000 British, about 9,800 French and 1,358 Indian soldiers died in the campaign. The losses for the Turkish forces were also immense. More than 86,000 Turkish soldiers lost their lives defending the Ottoman Empire.

Australians and the allied forces were fighting against enemies (Ottoman Turks) who were unknown to them culturally and religiously. In June 1915 Charles EW Bean sent an intelligence report from Gallipoli to the Australian Imperial Force on the Turks:

It has been assiduously preached to the Turks that this is a Holy War or ‘Jehad’, as the Koran, the sacred book of the Mohammedans, calls it. The chief spiritual authority of Islam was also persuaded last December to issue a ‘Fatwa’ (official religious pronouncement) to this effect …

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5 R Evans, *Fighting words: writing about race*, University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, Qld, 1999, p 97; *The Worker*, 26 August 1915, cited in R Evans, ‘The pen and the sword, anti-Germanism in Queensland over the last 150 years’ in M Jurgensen and A Corkhill (eds) *The German presence in Queensland over the last 150 years*, Department of German, University of Queensland, St Lucia, Qld, 1988, pp 3–21; see also C Wilcox, ‘World War I’ in G Davison, J Hirst and S Macintyre (eds) *The Oxford companion to Australian history*, revised ed, Oxford University Press, South Melbourne, 2001, p 699.


7 Historian Charles EW Bean was an official correspondent to the Australian Imperial Force. He accompanied the first Australian convoy to Egypt, and landed with them at Gallipoli on 25 April 1915. He remained there for most of the campaign. See ‘Charles Edwin Woodrow (C E W) Bean’, *Australian War Memorial*, http://www.awm.gov.au/people/20388.asp, accessed 26 April 2013.
The mere fact that Turkish troops advance to the charge shouting ‘Allah’ does not prove that they are inspired by fanaticism. The use of the name of god is general among the Turks in moments of excitement, and its use as a war-cry is traditional from the time when every war was regarded as a Holy War, and has become almost mechanical.

The fanatical feelings of the Turks are apt to be heightened at times of religious festivals, and can at times be played on so as to arouse them to such a pitch of fanaticism at which the slaying of the unbeliever at any cost becomes the ruling passion.\(^8\)

The intelligence report was vivid. During wartime, views about enemy combatants are driven by ideologies that can be nationalistic, religious or cultural.

**The question of enemy subjects**

In Australia’s immigration history Germans have been the most favoured non-British immigrant group\(^9\) but during World War 1 they were suddenly seen as a threat to Australian security because their country of origin was at war with the British Empire. There was also a fear of the possibility of German spies in Australia, circulation of anti-war pamphlets and anti-war propagandists forming links with Germany.\(^10\) In these circumstances, German-born and Australian-born people of German origin, who had been successful in agriculture, business, politics and other professions, were interned. The wartime animosity generated towards naturalised Germans forced them to abandon their own culture and attempt to assimilate Anglo-Australian beliefs.\(^11\)

There were only a handful of Ottoman Turks in Australia during World War 1. But their country of origin, Ottoman Empire/Turkey, was an ally of Germany, hence they were

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considered ‘enemy aliens’. On 6 November 1914 the Department of Defence in Melbourne sent a telegram to the Commandants of all Military Districts in Australia stating: ‘War has been declared against Turkey. Note that the subjects of the Turkish Empire are enemy subjects and keep all Turkish subjects under surveillance.’ Under the pattern of restrictions imposed on all Turkish subjects, all those born in Turkey, both Ottoman Turks and Syrian subjects, came under surveillance. All Turkish subjects, including those who were Syrian or Lebanese, were required to report to police stations weekly.

**Loyal voices of ethnic minorities**

There was a significant presence of non-white (mainly Asian) labourers in Australia in the early twentieth century. Under the *Immigration Restriction Act 1901* (unofficially known as the ‘White Australia Policy’, 1901–1973), non-white or ‘coloured’ people were deprived of equal rights even though some of them were British subjects. Yet minority voices kept reminding the Australian government of their contribution to this country.

In 1919 M Abdullah, an Indian Muslim, wrote to the British Prime Minister:

> My countrymen going back to India being denied the right of returning to Australia where our interests are without giving one year notice of such intention…..My countrymen have proven their loyalty all through the late disastrous war and in fact in every war in which England has been engaged and I am proud to claim the British flag.

In 1921 Ibrahim Hajj Turban wrote to the Australian government:

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12 ‘Enemy alien’ meant a person who, not being a British subject, possessed the nationality of a state at war with His Majesty. See War – 1939. Definition of Term ‘Enemy Alien’, NAA, ACT, Series A1608/1, Item P19/1.

13 Turkish Subjects, NAA, Vic., Series MP16/1, Item 1915/3/1508.


15 Indians Wishing to Come to Australia, NAA, ACT, Series CP78/22, Item 1922/649.
Our love for our adopted country, and our loyalty to his majesty the King cannot be questioned, and was proved by the action of several of our people (although unnaturalised) who volunteered and served in the late war which ended victoriously and some have paid the supreme sacrifice.\(^{16}\)

In 1999 Fred Atim Shandiman, a third generation Javanese Australian, recalled his experience during World War 2:

I enlisted myself in the Australian Imperial Force. I was given training in Wacol, Brisbane for about 4 months and I was supposed to be sent to Japan. When I got half way through, they said, 'Oh, we can’t take you over there because you look like a Jap [Japanese]'. So they brought me back in an aircraft. It was very frustrating. I was not discharged from the army. They could call me back within 24 hours time. I am still not discharged from the army.

As for the RSL [Returned Services League], I did not become a RSL member. You see, my brother got killed in the war in Papua New Guinea and I don’t want to go there again. It’s only just remembering my brother all the time. They have these big turn ups on the Anzac Day, which they will have next week. We are supposed to go and march, but I don’t want to be in that. I lost a brother so it makes me feel sad.\(^{17}\)

Anzac Day is a day of remembrance. Many Australians choose to go to Anzac Day services and marches to pay their respect to their lost loved ones, while some stay home and solemnly remember them. As Australians celebrate Anzac Day, lest we forget the fallen soldiers (including ethnic minorities) who have served this nation.

\(^{16}\) IH Turban (Syrian Muslim), NAA, ACT, Series A1/15, Item 21/4552.
\(^{17}\) Interviewed by the author, Mackay, Queensland, April 1999.