

# References on the Anzac Legend

## Recent criticisms by returned soldiers and military personnel

James Brown, *ANZAC's Long Shadow: The cost of our national obsession*, Black Inc. Feb 2014

Recent media coverage of the Gallipoli centenary and the controversy surrounding the way in which Anzac Day has been promoted since the late 1990s:

ABC RN Breakfast, 'Anzac's Long Shadow', Mon 17<sup>th</sup> Feb 2014. Audio link:

<http://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/breakfast/anzacs-long-shadow/5263758>

Interview with The Lowy Institute's James Brown about his new book *ANZAC's Long Shadow* which criticises the amount of time, money and emotion spent on commemorating the ANZAC legend.

ABC's 7.30 Report on 13th Feb 2014, <http://www.abc.net.au/7.30/content/2013/s3944397.htm>

Excerpts: "More than 12 months out from the ANZAC centenary, Australia is gearing up for an enormous celebration to mark the hundredth anniversary of the Gallipoli landing. 8,000 Australians will flock to ANZAC Cove for the event and over \$325 million is to be outlaid on First World War commemorations, more than double the amount Britain plans to spend.

"The ANZAC legend has generated an enormous industry and now one Army veteran is asking whether our ANZAC obsession has gone too far. Former officer James Brown commanded troops in Iraq and was attached to the Special Forces in Afghanistan. He says ANZAC Day has become a lavish festival of the dead and argues the money would be better spent supporting returning soldiers who are struggling to deal with the physical and psychological legacy of war. And some other veterans agree with him."

Quote from the program's interview with James Brown: "The injunction at most war memorials is, "Let silent contemplation be your offering". But instead we're about to embark on a four-year festival for the dead which in some cases looks like a military Halloween."

## Criticisms by Australian historians

References relating to the promotion of the Anzac legend and the way it has been used to militarise and distort Australian history:

Marilyn Lake & Henry Reynolds, *What's Wrong with Anzac?*, UNSW Press, 2010

In this work, Marilyn Lake argues that the "mythologising of Anzac as our national creation story and the popular rewriting of history ... (has) effectively marginalised other formative experiences, especially cultural, social and political achievements in the making of the nation." p. 10.

An excellent website on the Anzac legend and the recounting of Australians at war is Honest History: <http://honesthistory.net.au>

The establishment of this website was based upon the fear that during "the period 2014-19 Australians will be exposed to bellicose claptrap – to history that is essentially dishonest: unjustified, exaggerated, distorted; unbalanced even if it is not inaccurate". See Peter Stanley's address: <http://honesthistory.net.au/wp/gallipoli-club-peter-stanley/>

## Public debates on the Anzac legend

Links to a couple of popular public debates:

The Wheeler Centre / St James Ethics Centre debate on 'Anzac Day is More Puff than Substance', Melbourne Town Hall, 30<sup>th</sup> April 2013. Link to the video of the debate:

<http://wheelercentre.com/videos/video/intelligence-squared-debate-anzac-day-is-more-puff-than-substance/>

The Festival of Dangerous Ideas debate between Marilyn Lake and Peter FitzSimons, Sydney Opera House, 'Anzac Day: Best We Forget", Sept 2012. Link to the video of the debate:

<http://ideas.sydneyoperahouse.com/2013/anzac-day-best-we-forget-2/>

For a response by David Stephens, Secretary of Honest History, to criticism made by Andrew Nikolic MP, former Brigadier and Liberal member for Bass, Tasmania, of Prof Peter Stanley's remarks on the Anzac tradition and the impending commemoration of World War I:

<http://honesthistory.net.au/wp/should-we-softpedal-on-gallipoli/>

## Other contributions

For an informative series of papers on War and Militarism, see the Medical Association for Prevention of War (MAPW) website: <http://www.mapw.org.au>

Includes the following papers/publications:

- Marilyn Lake, 'Militarising Australian History', Paper 1, Feb 2012 (*attached*)
- Jenny Grounds, 'War is a health hazard', Paper 2, Mar 2012
- Paul Barratt, 'Sending Australians to War', Paper 3, Apr 2012
- John Langmore, 'Promoting security: militarism or diplomacy', Paper 4, Jul 2012
- Alison Broinowski (ed.), *Why did we go to war in Iraq?* Iraq War Inquiry Group booklet, Aug 2012
- Joy Damousi, 'Emotions and the criticism of war', Paper 5, Sep 2012
- Michelle Fahy, 'Australia's trade in arms', Paper 6, Nov 2012
- Stewart Firth, 'Australia's military relationships', Paper 7, Mar 2013
- MAPW, *War or Health: Why Diplomacy is Better than Warfare*, July 2013.

Belinda Lowe, 'What's Wrong With Anzac?' St James Ethics Centre, 1st Dec 2012,

<http://www.ethics.org.au/articles/what-s-wrong-with-Anzac>

An excerpt: "Criticising ANZAC is a serious thing. It isn't just a criticism of the day and the commemoration. It's a criticism about the exclusivity of the legend and what has been accepted to be Australia's identity and birth as a nation. It's a criticism of the folly of war and Australia's role as a pawn in international conflict, a criticism of Australian defence policy and a criticism of our relationship with the US. Dissent from the mandated narrative is serious because it threatens power structures which stretch between the smallest of communities to the grandest of political theatres where geopolitical relations play out. These structures work to reinforce war and not peace, promote a white Australian identity rather than a multicultural one and fortify our inability to act in our own best interests in foreign policy decisions. This is what is wrong with ANZAC."

