



## **ANZAC Day Address 2026 - “Fighting the Good Fight” by Carlo Novak**

Good morning distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen, boys and girls.

Thank you for having me here today. And thank you to South Arm RSL President, Terry Roe, for the invitation to speak on such an auspicious occasion. I am truly humbled.

I have been asked by Terry to speak as the voice of a modern-day veteran...and since I am both modern and a veteran....I guess I fit the mould.

I am honoured to stand before you... to share a snapshot of my upbringing, my service and my reflections on the meaning and relevance of Anzac Day today.

I grew up in Mount Isa, a small mining town in far north-west Queensland.

My parents migrated to Australia, drawn by the freedoms and opportunities this country has to offer. They raised us with a deep sense of national pride, and instilled in us the belief that there is no greater honour than to serve others and to serve one's country.

My father, a strong German man, was determined that we would grow up as Australians through and through. Despite both parents being multi-lingual, we weren't allowed to speak anything but English at home. Looking back now I understand his intention. He wanted us grounded in identity, united as Australians first and foremost.

Some of my fondest memories are of standing beside my father and brother at ANZAC Day parades—watching veterans march past. I remember clapping, staring in awe at those steely-eyed, thousand-yard stares, sensing—even as a child—that these men carried stories far deeper than words.

My father would buy us army uniforms from the local disposal store and with sleeves rolled up far too high, we'd spend weekends playing soldiers in the bush—digging foxholes, fortifying positions, and splitting into teams to attack and defend. Like Bluey's Dad said, “the 80's were a crazy time, man!”

At the time it was just play, but those moments planted seeds in me of something much greater.

At the ages of 19 respectively, my brother and I both enlisted in the Australian Army as infantry soldiers. Our childhood dreams to serve, became reality.

It wasn't long before I deployed on my first operation to East Timor. I will never forget what it felt like returning home—marching on ANZAC Day as a veteran, alongside my military brothers. Hearing the applause, seeing children look up in awe—it deepened my sense of pride and purpose. I knew then that I was part of something far greater than myself.

During my full-time service,

I had the honour of completing 4 tours of active duty.

East Timor...

Iraq...

Afghanistan...

and again to East Timor which had become Timor Leste.

I served alongside many amazing men and women. Some of which sadly are no longer with us. But I stand here today in honour of them.

After nine years, my military career came to an end. By then, I had matured quickly. Some of the younger soldiers even nicknamed me “Papa Noves,” seeing me as a father figure—someone who led from the front and never expected anything from others that I wouldn't demand of myself.

But like many veterans, I now carried the scars of my service—injuries sustained in both training and on deployment began making life more challenging.

After much thought and prayer, I made the decision to discharge and pursue a career as a paramedic. I still felt called to serve—but as a young man in my twenties, I also wanted to understand life beyond the military before it was too late.

It was during this next chapter that I discovered something confronting:

The battle wasn't over. In fact, I was stepping into what I now know, was my toughest tour of duty yet—the war within the mind.

Some of you here have heard me describe what I went through. I often liken it to being trapped in a deep well- cold, alone, covered in filth. Every time I tried to climb out, the walls were too slippery to grip. I would fall, again and again, each time feeling more defeated. I had

fought in literal war zones, relied on my training and strength to get me through...yet neither could help me in this fight.

Like my time in the Army though, I refused to quit. Eventually I found something that changed everything- my faith.

I came to understand that the struggle itself was shaping me. That there was someone much greater than myself in control, and that there was purpose in my pain....a new purpose for my life.

When I finally looked up, I could see the light. For me, that light was Jesus.

Don't get me wrong, i still carry scars, there are days where pain and depression still plague me, but these do not define me. I have a hope and a future. And I have learnt 'the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not and will not overcome it' John 1:5

The unfortunate reality is though- that many veterans never find the way out.

In Australia alone, men account for 77% of suicides and within the veteran community, that rate is even higher.

Many return home from war, but never truly leave it behind. Carrying with them scars both physically and mentally. Remember those 'thousand yard stares'?

Too many families receive the call. Too many lives are lost to a battle that is invisible to most. And that's why it matters that we speak about it, that we come together to honour and to remember. ANZAC Day is, at its heart, a day of solemn reflection. A day to be thankful, to honour and pay tribute to those who chose to stand up and fight the good fight, so that we could live in freedom.

In the words of Winston Churchill-

"We sleep soundly in our beds at night because of rough men who stand ready in the night to visit violence on those who would do us harm".

For me, as a modern veteran, the meaning of ANZAC Day has only deepened over time. Because I now understand this truth:

Not everyone who comes home... truly comes home.

That understanding has given me a greater sense of compassion, and a deeper appreciation for life.

Each of us has a sphere of influence. Each of us has a choice—to uplift, to support, to notice, and to remember.

I'd like to leave you with some words that have had a profound impact on me, and on many within the veteran community.

“The Man in the Arena”:- by Theodore Roosevelt.

It is not the critic who counts; not the man who points out how the strong man stumbles, or where the doer of deeds could have done them better.

The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena,  
whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood;  
who strives valiantly; who errs, who comes short again and again,  
because there is no effort without error and shortcoming;  
but who does actually strive to do the deeds;  
who knows great enthusiasms, the great devotions;  
who spends himself in a worthy cause;  
who at the best knows, in the end, the triumph of high achievement,  
and who at the worst, if he fails, at least fails while daring greatly,  
so that his place shall never be with those cold and timid souls  
who neither know victory nor defeat.

Thank you everyone.

Lest we forget.