

## **Address at APMP Site 14 Sep 2009**

**Fellow Peacekeepers, Ministers, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen**

**Welcome to this first commemorative service to be held at the location of the future Australian Peacekeeping Memorial, a national memorial that we hope to see erected soon on this site on ANZAC Parade, Canberra to commemorate the service of Australian peacekeepers past, present and future.**

**Our vision is to see this Memorial opened on the 14<sup>th</sup> September 2012, three years from today, on Australian Peacekeepers and Peacemakers Day. This date will be the 65<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the 14<sup>th</sup> September 1947 when four Australian military officers arrived in Jogjakarta in response to a request from the UN Good Offices Commission in Indonesia for military officers to be attached to either side for observation of the cease fire and to report on relevant information. We claim these four Australians were the very first United Nations military observers and peacekeepers. (They were Brigadier Lewis Dyke, Commander Henry Chesterman RAN, Major DL Campbell and Squadron Leader Lou Spence DFC)**

**Since then the Australian Government has deployed tens of thousands of Australian military, police and civilians as individuals and contingents to United Nations and other coalition peacekeeping missions and stability operations around the world. The list of missions in which they have served with distinction now exceeds 60 and will expand further in the future.**

**In these missions, young Australian peacekeepers, men and women, have often operated in very difficult and dangerous conditions. A number have given their lives in the service of peace and many more have been injured and traumatized during their deployment.**

**Today we should remember the difficulties and dangers that international peacekeeping often faces in remote and isolated regions, where infrastructure is destroyed and peace is at best fragile. The peacekeepers deployed in these missions are critical to the process of developing and maintaining the fragile peace that follows conflict. Their actions to separate armed forces, reinstate the rule of law, support local communities and assist peacebuilding helps to develop stable environments and gives hope to countries emerging from conflict. Australia has a proud record over many years as a significant contributor to such peacekeeping missions and stability operations.**

**Today we should acknowledge the skills, professionalism, resourcefulness and courage required of individuals in such circumstances, the often horrific humanitarian crises and human rights abuses they must confront and the long term emotional and physiological impact these experiences can have on individuals. We should remember and thank the families of our peacekeepers for the support they have given to their loved ones and to the losses they have suffered.**

**Peacekeeping, peace operations and support to peace-building is now core business for the Australian Defence Force, the Australian Federal Police and a number of Federal Government Departments. This is demonstrated by Australia's strong commitment over the years to peace operations in missions such as in Timor Leste, in Bougainville, in the Solomon Islands, Cambodia, Rwanda, the Middle East and Cyprus amongst others as well as in Iraq and Afghanistan.**

**I have had the honour to command a UN peacekeeping mission that included an Australian contingent, and I have observed other Australian civilians, military and police on such operations all around the world. Recently I visited the Regional Assistance Mission in the Solomon Islands and met Australian police, military and civilians who are contributing so much to the restoration of that nation. I am proud of their activities and I believe all Australians should take pride in the efforts and achievements of Australians as they face the challenges of their peacekeeping and stability missions with resolution, bravery and dedication.**

**Today, on Australian Peacekeepers and Peacemakers Day we should especially remember them. This place, the site of the future Australian Peacekeeping Memorial, is an appropriate place to commemorate their fine service.**

**Thank you all for joining us here today to acknowledge this day and this site.**

**Lest we forget.**