

ANZAC DAY SPEECH:

Often forgotten in Australian history is the contribution that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples made to WW1.

It is believed that during WW1 around 500-1000 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples managed to enlist despite the banning of non-Europeans from serving in the Australian military.

If a man was willing to sign on the dotted line, the recruiting officers didn't care so much about the colour of his skin.

The exact number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples who volunteered for service is unknown because, ironically, origin was not actually recorded on personnel files. A man became a soldier, in the army, regardless of the colour of his skin.

The aboriginal people who served for Australia in World War 1 died for a variety of reasons. About a third of the soldiers died from diseases or wounds, but most were killed in action fighting for our country.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples were not discriminated against whilst at war – in fact they were considered brothers to the rest of the soldiers.

However, when arriving back home they were continued to be treated poorly with very few civil rights.

Over 1,500 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples served in World War 1 with approximately 300 killed at the western front.

13 were killed on the Gallipoli shores and military records show that at least 3 were captured and became prisoners of war.