

Let's talk...

ANZAC Stories



ANZAC Day is an opportunity for all Australians to recognise and honour the significant and varied contributions of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander military servicepeople. To pay our respects to some of Australia's many First Nations military heroes, we have collected a number of stories that span over 100 years of service.

Lest we forget.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are advised that this fact sheet contains images and names of people who have passed away.

Private Richard Martin



When Private Richard Martin joined the Australian Imperial Force he declared on his papers that he was born in Dunedin, New Zealand, and that he had five years' prior service in the Light Horse. He was not the only Aboriginal person to lie about his heritage in order to serve. Richard in fact was born on Stradbroke Island in Queensland. Richard served on Gallipoli in the 15th Battalion, went on to serve in France and Belgium, and was wounded in action three times. He was killed in action on 28 March, 1918. He is believed to be buried in the Military Cemetery Dernancourt Railway Line.

Image: Studio portrait of 1359 Private Richard Martin. Australian War Memorial

William Irwin

William Irwin, an Aboriginal man, joined up to defend his country in 1916 at the age of 37, serving in the 33rd Battalion. Having been wounded three times in France and Belgium, William fought his last battle at Road Wood, near Bouchavesnes in France. German machine gunners had pinned down William's battalion under fire, and had stopped the Allies advance. In an incredible show of heroism, William rushed the German machine gunners, likely saving numerous lives, but was mortally wounded. He would later receive posthumously the Distinguished Conduct Medal—one of only three known Indigenous soldiers to have been awarded the DCM.

The Lovett family



The Lovett family occupy an impressive position in Australian military history as one of the largest volunteer family groups to serve on the side of the British Empire. Overall, twenty members of the Lovett family, including two female members, have served Australia in both war and peacekeeping missions, from the Western Front to East Timor. Not only did all twenty members survive their service, but four of the Lovett brothers served in both World War I and World War II.

The Lovetts are Gunditjmara people from Victoria's western districts. Known as the "fighting Gunditjmara", they fought British Settlers in the Eumarella War in the 1840s. Decades later, during World War I, five Lovett brothers voluntarily enlisted to fight with the Australian armed forces on the side of the British Empire, despite not being recognised as Australian citizens. Like many other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, their applications were nearly rejected because of their Aboriginal status. However, they were eventually accepted because they were not "pure blooded blacks".

When they returned home, the Lovett family's traditional lands, at Lake Condah, were sold to the State Government for its Solider Settlement Scheme. Unlike other non-Indigenous servicemen who were offered land upon their return, the Lovett's application for land under the scheme was denied.

In more recent years, the Lovett family has received some recognition. In 2000, the Lovett Tower in the Department of Veteran Affairs Building in Canberra was named in recognition of the Lovett family's contribution to the Australian military.

Image: Private Samuel Alexander Peacock (Sam) Lovett, and his niece, 95994 Aircraftwoman (ACW) Alice Lovett. Australian War Memorial



Oodgeroo Noonuccal (Kath Walker)

Oodgeroo Noonuccal, born Kathleen Ruska, was a descendent of the Noonuccal people of North Stradbroke Island, off the coast of Brisbane in Queensland.

After leaving school at 13 to find work to support her family, Kathleen enlisted in the Australian Women's Army Service in 1942 after her two brothers were captured by the Japanese at the fall of Singapore.

Although Kath had been warned that she might suffer racial discrimination in the Army, she found this not to be the

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case. Rather, she established many friendships within the Army, particularly with Black American Soldiers, and white Australians. Kath was trained as a telephonist and was promoted to Corporal and given the responsibility of training some new recruits. Kath left the Army in December 1942 as a persistent middle ear infection made her unable to perform her job.

Racial prejudice continued to exist after the war, with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people unable to vote or even own land. After Kath's positive experiences in the Army and the discrimination she faced after leaving, she became a fervent advocate for Aboriginal rights. During the 1950s, she became a member of the Communist Party, believing that this offered the best opportunity for advancing the interests of Aboriginal people.

She was the Queensland State Secretary of the Federal Council for the Advancement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders (FCAATSI) in 1962.

Kath was also a key figure in the campaign for the 1967 Referendum, lobbying Prime Minister Robert Menzies in 1965, and his successor Harold Holt in 1966, for their support in the campaign. She wrote two books on the subject of Aboriginal citizenship, the first titled *Integration and Queensland Society* in 1968 and *My People* in 1970. Also in 1970, Kath was awarded a Member of the British Empire (MBE) for her services to Aboriginal people. However, in 1988, frustrated by the slow progress which was made by governments in Australia, she returned her MBE on the bicentenary of white settlement in Australia. In 1988, Kath also changed her name to Oodgeroo Noonuccal, in recognition of her Noonuccal ancestors.

Oodgeroo was a poet, and her poetry achieved wide acclaim in the post war years. She was the first Aboriginal poet to publish a volume of verse. She began her career as a poet in 1964 beginning with *We Are Going*. In 1966 she released *The Dawn is at Hand* which won the Jessie Litchfield award for Australian Literature. Later, Oodgeroo was also awarded the Fellowship of Australian Writers Award, and the Dame Mary Gilmore Medal.

On 16 September, 1993, Oodgeroo died after a brief battle with cancer. Her contributions will not be forgotten.

Image: Oodgeroo Noonuccal. Australian War Memorial



Sergeant Anne Dufficy

Sergeant Anne Dufficy, a Tamwoy descendant from the Kodal (crocodile) Thupmul (Stingray) clans from Badu Island in the Torres Strait, joined the Australian Army when she was 18 years old. She followed in the footsteps of both her grandfather, Timothy Tamwoy, who served in the Torres Strait Light Infantry Battalion

during the Second World War, and her father, who was an Infantryman in the 2nd/4th Battalion, in The Royal Australian Regiment.

Sergeant Dufficy has been deployed to the Middle East and Christmas Island, and has served in the 51st Battalion, the Far North Regiment in Cairns. Sergeant Dufficy believes the greatest benefit she receives from the Army is the sense of belonging, and she proudly continues the tradition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians serving in the ADF.

Image: Warrant Officer Class One Ken Nelliman and Sergeant Annie Dufficy, Indigenous Recruiting Team, at the Australian Defence Force Career Expo, Townsville. Image courtesy of the Commonwealth of Australia, Department of Defence

Chief Petty Officer Ray Rosendale CSM



Chief Petty Officer Ray Rosendale is a Kuku Yalanji man of the Western Sunset Clan, whose traditional lands are situated northwest of Cairns in Far North Queensland, joined the Navy in 1991, and has served in various operational, peacekeeping and peacetime Navy roles. With his appointment to Navy Strategic Advisor on Indigenous Cultural Affairs, Chief Petty Officer Rosendale created history by becoming the first Indigenous serving member to hold a permanent position directly related to Indigenous affairs within the Australian Defence Force.

Applauding the Navy's work towards diversity and inclusion, Chief Petty Officer Rosendale takes pride in the ADF's egalitarian values, which provided, and continue to provide, opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Image: Chief Petty Officer Ray Rosendale, CSM. Image courtesy of the Commonwealth of Australia, Department of Defence