

## “Come on mate – I’ll give you a hand” – the Spirit of ANZAC



“Our soldiers go to East Timor as part of a great Australian military tradition, which has never sought to impose the will of this country on others, but only to defend what is right.”

Prime Minister John Howard, address to the nation,  
19 September 1999

1. Look at this interview with Major General Peter Cosgrove, head of the InterFET force, and decide:
  - what is the ‘Spirit of ANZAC’?
  - how it is being shown in East Timor.
2. Do you think he has a right to be proud of what the Australian troops are doing?



When we got here we had to seize the capital city of Dili and branch out from there. And what we needed to do was to patrol the streets and to make sure that violent armed people weren’t allowed to roam the streets picking on innocent civilians – men, women and children – and hurting them. Easy to say, but difficult to do because you had to first pick out who were the adversaries and who were the innocents, but the soldiers proved to be very good at that and very quickly the militias, that’s what we call the adversary, learned that it was pointless to continue to try to perform their bullying acts and either laid down their weapons or left East Timor.

Today the vast majority of East Timorese can get about their lives rehabilitating their homes, sending their kids back to school, planting their crops, getting medical treatment and generally trying to rebuild after great devastation. They’ll bounce back. They need help, but they’ll bounce back.

There are still a number of people alive here who remember vividly the Australian presence in World War 2 and were so pleased to see us return in a way that has brought urgent help to them. And I’m so pleased to have been able to pay back a little of the debt of honour which we owed them for risking their own lives for our soldiers sixty years ago.

I’ve also discovered that the Spirit of ANZAC lives on. It is one that permeates all Australians and not just ones in uniform. It’s the innate Australian quality of wishing that everybody could get a fair go. That everybody would have a chance to live their lives pretty much as they should; that nobody should be allowed to be bullied around by somebody who uses violence or oppression against them. That and the innate mateship and loyalty which has always characterised Australians. I have seen these fine men and women look their adversary in the eye and get on with their job. I have seen them reach out a helping hand to Timorese of all ages and to extend that hand of friendship with a smile – ‘come on mate, I’ll give you a hand’. This has won for us a tremendous reputation amongst these people as professional soldiers and sailors and airmen and women who’ve got a big heart.

I think young Australians today as a generation still have those ANZAC qualities, that ANZAC Spirit in abundance. These young people here who are representative of the thousands of younger people in Australia who might not be serving are nonetheless typical Australians and I think we will find that spirit is there in our young Australians be they young or of military age.

My pride in them knows no bounds. They are magnificent young Australians and I think we are very lucky in Australia for the quality of our people. The Army, Navy and the Air Force will be in safe hands when an older guy like me retires!