

CO's Speech on Occasion of the Bicentenary of Lancer Barracks

The Hon Dr Geoff Lee MP, Member for Parramatta, Minister for Skills and Tertiary Education

Councillor Bob Dwyer, Lord Mayor of Parramatta,

Major General Campbell AO, CSC, Commander of the Second Division,

Distinguished Guests, Officers and Soldiers of the 1st/15th Royal New South Wales Lancers

It's an honour to stand before you today to help commemorate the significant milestone of the bicentenary of Lancer Barracks and its place as the oldest continuously occupied military barracks on mainland Australia. Lancer Barracks has a long and proud history in the service of Great Britain, NSW and since federation, the Commonwealth of Australia.

The Lancer's close association with the barracks and Parramatta commenced in 1891 with the arrival of K Troop and we have been here ever since. Few barracks today are named for the Unit that is quartered within it. The unit is committed to the service of its nation and remains one of the oldest and most decorated on the Australian Army's Order of Battle. Lancer Barracks has played a significant role in this as a training ground and staging base prior to Lancers being sent overseas to exercise and to war.

That legacy of service and connection to the barracks continues today with the current occupants. The barracks now houses a wide variety of those who share a common interest in the defence of Australia, our heritage, service and self-improvement. These range from our youth to those who still wish to stay connected after they have completed their formal service with the ADF. The current occupants are:

- the NSW Lancer Association
- the NSW Lancer Memorial Museum
- 203 Australian Army Cadet Unit
- 3 Platoon, Sydney University Regiment; and
- RHQ, Band and other elements of 1/15 RNSWL

In addition to the formal lodgers, the barracks is also regularly used by many of our wider colleagues and partners including the NSW Police Force and several regular Army units from the Sydney area. Most recently the 6th Aviation Regiment used the barracks to rehearse tactical flying and insertion with their Blackhawk aircraft and the

School of Military Engineering, Explosive Detection Dog (EDD) Team regularly conduct search training here.

More importantly, the barracks has recently been used as an operational base for support to domestic operations and exercises. In April and May this year Lancer Barracks became the Joint Task Unit HQ location for JTU 629.1.3 on Operation COVID-19 ASSIST providing support to the NSW Police with quarantine compliance management. The barracks was able to rapidly be converted from an Army Reserve depot into a functioning, operational and joint headquarter location.

The barracks was also used in support of Operation Tartan Oceania 19 last year, providing support to the Royal Edinburgh Military Tattoo (Sydney) where the ADF supported visiting militaries from thirteen different nations, all quartered in the Homebush area. The location of the barracks helped provide an excellent combat service support node.

Custodians of the barracks over the years have worked hard to retain as much of the original character as possible while still using the barracks as an operational base and an engagement point with the community. The Chief of Army talks about us as “an Army for the nation and an Army in the community” and I feel Lancer Barracks helps represent this today.

While the barracks has remained largely unchanged the skyline and community around us has changed significantly. Today, Australia is one of the most culturally diverse places on the planet, Parramatta embraces this multiculturalism, with close to 50% of its residents born overseas. The composition of the Lancers today is more diverse than it has ever been reflecting the community we serve. The location of the barracks in Sydney’s central city provides an attractive recruitment option for those who wish to serve in the Parramatta area.

The barracks today also provides opportunities for members of the public to visit aspects of the base to learn about the service of our forebears and experience the heritage first hand. I am always interested to hear of the various school groups that come to visit the barracks and Museum and their reflections on our servicemen and women. Additionally the barracks holds memorials to all of those from the Regiment who have passed away in war and in training, providing a focal point for commemoration.

I’d like to share a quote from the Regimental History from 1974, “notwithstanding any shortcomings of Lancer Barracks as a depot for a modern regiment, the 1/15 RNSWL strongly cherishes its occupancy of this site, the history of which reaches back to 1820; indeed the very name indicates its association with the Regiment.”

On the international front, I have been grateful for well wishes the Unit has received on this occasion from the modern descendants of several British Regiments who served at the Barracks in the 1800s, including the Royal Anglican Regiment and The Duke of Lancaster's Regiment. They remember Lancer Barracks as not just a colonial outpost but also where several of their members passed away and are buried.

Finally Lancer Barracks, despite the ravages of time, two global pandemics, the passing of thousands of soldiers through her gate and on her parade ground, and an ever growing vertical expansion around the barracks, has remained relevant and steadfast, true the Regiment's motto, *steadfast in faith*.

I remain *tenax in fide*.

A.T. White
LTCOL
CO
1/15 RNSWL

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