



## Reflections from Gallipoli — Hon. Meka Whaitiri

**"I was honoured to represent New Zealand at the Anzac Day commemorative events in Gallipoli. They had been cancelled for the past two years because of COVID-19, so it was very special to pick up the torch for New Zealand again in such a special place."**

I arrived a couple of days before Anzac Day, and on 23 April, I was escorted around some of the battlefields on the peninsula, including the Māori Pa site at No 3 Outpost, home to the Māori Pioneer Battalion.

Thirty-six men of the Māori Contingent are buried there. This was a very emotional visit, and I felt immensely privileged to be there.

New Zealand led the commemorations on Anzac Day morning this year, and I was accompanied by the Chief of Army and a contingent of around 30 personnel from across all three services of the New Zealand Defence Force. They were excellent representatives of our country, supportive, professional and respectful of the occasion and what it meant to everyone involved.

As the dawn service was held, we watched the sun come up over the beach. It was sobering and impressive — and I couldn't help but marvel at the bravery of the Kiwi soldiers, 107 years ago, who had streamed on to the land and up the sheer hills that towered in front of them.



Hon. Meka Whaitiri at Chunuk Bair, Gallipoli

Later that day I walked over those hills to another very moving ceremony that was held at the New Zealand Cemetery at Chunuk Bair. It is a beautiful place and the graves — so many of them — are beautifully looked after.

Our Turkish hosts are unfailingly generous in welcoming New Zealanders and Australians back to their country and to

Gallipoli year after year. It is a place where many of their own young men fell during the battles in 1915, and I had been privileged the previous day to be present at a Turkish commemorative service where their own dead were honoured and remembered.

**Each person who travels to Gallipoli will come away with their own experience and emotions. I was no different.**

The honour I felt delivering our country's words of kaupapa at the Dawn Service would be summed up in a few of the words I delivered in my commemorative address. As Minister for Veterans, I am all too aware how the cruelties and tragedy of war linger on, long after the wars themselves come to an end.


For Australians and New Zealanders, not knowing what had become of the battlefield graves of those who had died at Gallipoli was one such tragedy. We remember them all, and we take comfort in knowing that Turkey continues to look after them without regard to nationality, and with dignity and honour Ka maumahara tonu tātou ki a rātou

**Hon. Meka Whaitiri**  
**Minister for Veterans**

You can read more stories and updates in the Winter 2022 edition of the Veterans' Affairs Magazine



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