



MEDIA RELEASE

13.04.2015

THOUGHTS FOR ANZAC DAY 2015

By Dame Margaret Sparrow, Zonta Club of Wellington

As we commemorate the centennial of the battle of Gallipoli it is fitting that we remember the men who fought and the many who died in this battle and the many other battles of WW1.

But let us also remember the contributions of women often overlooked in war histories - especially the many wives, mothers, aunts, girlfriends, sisters and daughters of those men whose role on the home front was just as important. Many had to assume responsibilities previously undertaken by their men folk. Many worked with patriotic societies such as the Victoria League or for charities such as the Red Cross, St John or the Lady Liverpool League. They raised money, made clothes, knitted garments and wrapped gift parcels for soldiers, as well as caring for their families.

Let us also honour those women who took on extra challenges:

- The approximately 500 nurses who served in WW1 even though the New Zealand Government was initially reluctant to send nurses overseas. Ten nurses died on the troop ship *Marquette* when it was torpedoed in the Mediterranean by a German U-boat.
- The women who joined the British VAD (Voluntary Aid Detachment) because the New Zealand Government refused to send women volunteers.
- Dr Agnes Bennett whose offer to help overseas was declined by the New Zealand Government but who went anyway and ended up in charge of a medical unit of the Scottish Women's Hospital in Serbia. Other New Zealand women doctors joined her.
- Ettie Rout who formed the New Zealand Volunteer Sisterhood to provide amenities for the troops in canteens. Ettie campaigned to reduce the incidence of venereal disease and developed a prophylactic kit which was adopted by the military.
- Violinist Ina Boswith who with three other women musicians formed the Femina Quartet to entertain the troops.
- Miria Pomare who in 1915 formed the Maori Soldiers Fund along the same lines as Lady Liverpool's League. Both organisations sent comforts to soldiers overseas, and organised receptions for returned soldiers. She was awarded the OBE in 1918, the first woman to achieve this honour.

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