The ANZAC legend has had a significant impact on modern Australia. At Gallipoli, the legend formed when Australian and New Zealand soldiers displayed special characteristics forged against overwhelming odds in the furnace of war. These characteristics include endurance, courage, ingenuity, good humour, mateship, respect for the enemy and a famously anti-authoritarian larrikin streak. These continue to be qualities modern Australians revere and like to think typify the average Australian. These same distinctive qualities were demonstrated by the ANZACs throughout WWI, whether standing side by side with the British against the German A7Vs at Villers-Bretonneux or defending the Western Front at the Battle of the Somme.

The primary inspiration for the ANZAC legend was the fight against the Turks in Gallipoli. This was the first major military action for ANZACs, with more than 27,000 Australian and New Zealand soldiers landing at ANZAC Cove on April 25 1915. This campaign was one of the defining moments for the ANZACs as Australian and New Zealand soldiers displayed great courage, endurance, initiative and discipline. The British war correspondent Ellis Ashmead-Bartlett described the ANZACs first landing at Gallipoli: “They waited neither for orders nor for the boats to reach the beach, but, springing out into the sea, they waded ashore, and, forming some sort of rough line, rushed straight on the flashes of the enemy’s rifles.” This quote gave rise to the stereotype of the ANZAC soldier being contemptuous of danger and an equal of anyone on the battlefield. That first day when Australian and New Zealand soldiers stepped ashore at Anzac Cove is now the day when modern Australians bow their heads in silence and remember those who helped our nation forge its identity. The legend born in Gallipoli not only touches Australians and New Zealanders, but the Turks as well. They share this sense of pride and mateship that was forged in honourable battle. Perhaps nothing better displays the esteem in which the ANZAC troops were held than the famous message of the Turkish ruler Kemal Ataturk: “Those heroes that shed their blood and lost their lives... You are now lying in the soil of a friendly country. Therefore rest in peace. There is no difference between the Johnnies and the Mehmets to us where they lie side by side now here in this country of ours ... you, the mothers, who sent their sons from faraway countries wipe away your tears; your sons are now lying in our bosom and are in peace. After having lost their lives on this land they have become our sons as well.” Thus was the ANZAC legend born on April 25, 1915, and modern Australia has forever remembered the bravery and sacrifice demonstrated by those brave men who fought for freedom and justice.

The ANZAC legend was also forged on the Western Front fighting against the might of Germany. One of the most infamous battles that took place on the Western Front was at Villers-Bretonneux. This battle took place on April 24, 1918. The Germans took the town from the British, but that night and the following day the town was recaptured by the 4th and 5th Divisions of the First Australian Imperial Force at a cost of over 1200 Australian troops. The town’s mayor spoke of the Australian soldiers on July 14, 1919, when unveiling a memorial in their honour: “The first inhabitants of Villers-Bretonneux to re-establish themselves in the ruins of what was once a flourishing little town have, by means of donations, shown a desire to thank the valorous Australian Armies, who with spontaneous enthusiasm and characteristic dash of their race, in a few hours drove out an enemy ten times their number ... They offer a memorial tablet, a gift which is but the least expression of their gratitude, compared with the brilliant feat which was accomplished by the sons of Australia ... Soldiers of Australia, whose brothers lie here in French soil, be assured that your memory will always be kept alive, and that the burial places for your dead will always be respected and cared for.” The promise was further kept as the people of Villers-Bretonneux have since then held an ANZAC Day
Dawn Service each year ever since. The ANZAC legend was forged on the Western Front as well as in Gallipoli, as Australians and New Zealanders upheld the virtues of mateship, bravery, discipline and initiative; all the qualities that modern Australians strive to uphold.

The ANZAC legend was further forged at the Battle of the Somme. This battle resulted in Australia’s largest casualties with the loss of more than 20,000 men. It was also symbolic of Australia’s overall dedication to supporting the British Empire and France as more than 300,000 Australians served in World War I - at the time was roughly 10% of the population. Historian Michael Molkentin stated on the ABC documentary *Lost In Flanders*, “I have gained an appreciation for the deep wounds this conflict has left on Australian society. Even today I can’t help but think of a stone dropping in water and the ripples flowing out today and well beyond.” Charles Bean, the famous Australian war correspondent and historian, is a man whose words have helped Australian past and present understand and embrace the legend of ANZAC: “What these men did nothing can alter now,” he wrote. “The good and the bad, the greatness and the smallness of their story will stand. Whatever of glory it contains nothing now can lessen. It rises, as it will always rise, above the mists of the ages, a monument to great-hearted men; and, for their nation, a possession for ever.” The war on the Western Front helped define the ANZAC Legend through deeds of valour and comradeship.

In conclusion, the ANZAC legend has had a significant impact on Modern Australia, and the recent Centenary has added a clear sense of patriotism in all Australians. The very notion of what it means to be a modern Australian is still deeply rooted in the legend of ANZAC. The ideal Australian today still displays the characteristics that were displayed by the ANZACs – courage, mateship, hard work, larrikinism, questioning of authority and determination. On ANZAC we say 'Lest We Forget': but why should we remember? It's because they displayed characteristics that are still admired today in modern society. It's because it was the first time our young nation had fought overseas and shared blood in such huge numbers. And because it was the first time our young nation won the respect of others for the way we performed on the battlefield. And because they were fighting for freedom, which is a cause people still believe passionately in.