

ANZAC DAY 2020.

ANZAC day preparations began two days earlier with collecting egg cartons and cardboard from Woollies. I intended to make two wreaths that would be recycled over the next few years. The day before ANZAC I started work on one for the Cenotaph and one for my friends in Elliott street for their driveway display. As I was working away thoughts of our family who died in the bombing of Darwin as a result of a direct hit at the post office. Their young daughter was only 19 when she perished.

Growing up in Katherine when phones were scares, I remembered the police would come to homes and deliver the bad news of a relative who had died. Sometimes unusual screams and crying, mostly women's voices, could be heard then everything went quiet and the police officer could be seen heading back to work. How sad! I felt for all the families that had lost loved ones throughout the many generations of the world and the bearers of such news.

I heard a knock at my door. A teenage girl came to show me that her family had painted a huge remembrance mural on a tarp showing a Gallipoli scene they installed on their fence with a bunch of wreaths for ANZAC Day Dawn Service. I asked if I could hang my wreath up on the fence too and she said yes and took it home to hang up. This act was the start of more community spirit for us neighbours.

A tiredness came over me after delivering the surprise wreath to my friend's house that was in darkness around 10pm, so called it a night, setting an alarm for 3am to create a replacement wreath for the Cenotaph.

3am came and I thought this is something soldiers know about, lack of sleep and early rising and got to work on the wreath. I was listening out for sounds of neighbours stirring looking for lights so I could join people in their driveway.

At 5:55am amplified radio commentary broadcast from two houses away sounded out. I collected my wreath and headed there to sit with people who have known me before I was born, sitting in the dark, waiting for light. Kind of sums up a soldier's life. It was an intimate and emotional gathering of 9 people with cups of tea, candles, soft voices and dampness of the dew.

Right after the service I walked into town pondering the social distancing effects on community. Arriving at the Cenotaph and placing my wreath while

offering prayers then sitting for a while under a tree listening to the birds and insects enjoying the morning light.

My walk home was emotional. When I saw Countryman walking towards me on the path it hurt me deeply that I had to move to the road to avoid the possible virus. “Im sorry I have to move away, my heart hurts” I said. He replied “ im ryt lady, we bin la same”

