



(Above painting by Ellis Silas; AWM 2436)

### **What is Anzac Day?**

Anzac Day - 25 April - marks the anniversary of the first major military action fought by Australian and New Zealand forces during the First World War. ANZAC stands for Australian and New Zealand Army Corps. The soldiers in those forces quickly became known as Anzacs.

### **Why is this an important day for Australians?**

When war broke out in 1914 Australia had been a federal commonwealth for only fourteen years. The new national government was eager to establish its reputation among the nations of the world. In 1915 Australian and New Zealand soldiers formed part of the allied expedition that set out to capture the Gallipoli peninsula. They landed at Gallipoli on 25 April, meeting fierce resistance from the Turkish defenders. The campaign dragged on for eight months. At the end of 1915 the allied forces were evacuated after both sides had suffered heavy casualties and endured great hardships. Over 8,000 Australian soldiers were killed. News of the landing at Gallipoli made a profound impact on Australians at home and 25 April quickly became the day on which Australians remembered the sacrifice of those who had died in war. The Anzacs created an event which, it was felt, would help to shape the new Australia.

Every year hundreds of thousands of Australians participate in ANZAC Day. Some attend a dawn service at a local memorial or go to a religious service. Many take part in a march, or watch that march on the spot or at home on television. At sporting events on ANZAC Day crowds maintain a minute's solemn silence, while a bugler plays the "Last Post".