

“A person’s a person, no matter how small” (Seuss, 1954)

There are many historical events that could have been chosen for the comparison being made in this essay. The bravery and deaths of soldiers and loved ones in any of the World Wars, the Religious Crusades and the resulting battles or simply terrorist attacks closer to home and closer to our present. The decision to use the black death, or the bubonic plague was that this was one of the earliest known tragedies that killed around 200 million people (WikipediaA, 2019) over three years (1347-1350) by a seemingly insignificant miniature terror.

No amount of medical knowledge could help when the plague struck (Vanneste, 2010). Having started in China, through trade routes along the Silk Road the illness eventually reached Crimea (1346) and was rampant in Europe for the following three years; No one was safe from the possibility of death. Babies, children, adults, the poor, the rich, man and woman; this illness infected anyone, was unrelenting and devastating.

Scholars, scientists and priests began to realise that the human race was a unified one. It didn’t matter about the social, religious or economic standing of the individual (Slavecek, 2008); the human body could be affected and attacked no matter what. The understanding that external sources as small as the bite from a black rat, (suffering from a plague carrying flea), was concerning to all. This was an unprovoked attack; the flea changed the rat’s personality causing it to become sick and aggressive ultimately biting and infecting humans. This was not known until the 1900s.

But as this is the 21st century, we can learn from this event – that size does not matter. From the youngest, smallest navy cadet to the eldest, longest serving naval officer – all life has a part to play in the safety and continuity of humanity. How does this flea and this plague relate to the future of the navy?

Firstly, being part of the armed forces and defending Australia from invasion (WikipediaB, 2019), should be able to be actioned by all people; Like the plague affecting all of society, our society of Catholics, Muslims, atheists, young and old, vegans, fruitarians, dog-lovers and cat-lovers could all find a place in the Navy. Simply, the human who says “Yes” to being

Australian, and “Yes” to the Armed Forces’ values and belief, “to defend Australia with pride” should be able to help keep Australia safe.

Secondly, education to school children about the protection, service, defence and historically significant attacks should be taught in class; the good will events, triumphs and losses should be acknowledged through social media and community interaction. The fear of the unknown be it the “badness” attempting to breach our shores, or the developing warfare overseas should be told to the Australian people. Knowledge is power (Gore & Gitlin, 2004), relationships are strengths.

If society had been aware of how the plague spread in the 1300s, they would have kept a cleaner house, been more vigilant in helping their neighbour have a cleaner house, kept an eye out on each other and the environment for the threat (rat!!). This relationship may have prevented the mass of deaths.

If a relationship can exist between the navy, army and air force with the known competitiveness between each of these forces (and the known types of personalities that join the armed forces!) then it is well and truly a possibility that no matter what your size, race, religion or background; the relationship between being an Australian and wanting to defend Australia means anything can happen.

Thirdly, if we think of the flea as a tiny bit of information overheard or seen, that could set off disastrous consequences on Australian shores then society should be aware of the help this bit of information could have in stopping and possibly preventing mass deaths or destruction. It isn’t just information on terrorism, but environmental concerns (illegal shipping of plant material that could endanger Australia’s economy) or social concerns of racism or gang warfare; society needs to watch out for each other, a competitive advantage and subsequent strength occurs when information sharing happens (Porter & Millar, 1985).

This is especially true for those men and women that are employed within the Armed Forces of Australia. This team of individuals share a purpose of protection not just to the person paying their wage, but to all of society. The need for the community to feel involved and listened to when concerns arise needs to happen, because as the future becomes reality,

implication for the Australian Navy (and the Armed Forces in general) might need that flea-like piece of information to contain or prevent another event that may one day be talked about as a “historically significant” act of warfare.

As this essay shows, the obviousness of equality within the recruitment of the navy, army and air force is needed; a relationship between the Armed Forces and the community is needed and finally communication and transparency between the Australian Defence Force and “civilians” will see battles won. Together with Australian pride the Royal Australian Navy will move from strength to strength.

To end as we began, with a writer much smarter than me,

“Unless someone like you cares a whole awful lot, nothing is going to get better. It’s not.” (Dr. Seuss, 1971)

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Autobiography: Zachary Hazelwood

My name is Zachary Hazelwood, I am 13 years old and started navy cadets in February this year. I am stationed at TS Paluma (in Queensland) and have attended every sleep over and every Saturday parade since joining.

I am in year 8 at Earnshaw State College and the only subject I do well in is English. I enjoy the writing and reading. I used to read Dr Seuss every night; I never got bored with the repetition and rhyme.

I have an older brother and a dog, and my grandparents have recently moved up to QLD.

I don't know what I'll be when I finish school, but it will involve travel and having tons of new experiences!! Mum taught me that we need to try everything once! I like that motto.

Zachary Hazelwood

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