Messages of hope and thanks to fallen soldiers made their way from primary students in outback Queensland to the slopes of Gallipoli in Turkey as part of ANZAC centenary commemorations this year.

Students from Our Lady’s Catholic Primary School, Longreach, St Joseph’s Catholic Primary School, Barcaldine and St Joseph’s Catholic Primary School Blackall were invited to decorate commemorative balsa wood crosses with short messages as part of the Australian War Memorial Commemorative Crosses Project coordinated by the Department of Education, Training and Employment.

Senior students selected to travel to Gallipoli to witness the historic Anzac Day centenary services took the crosses and placed them on graves and memorial sites of fallen Australian soldiers whilst visiting the Western Front battlefields in France and Belgium.

Catholic Education Regional Coordinator: Curriculum (Far West), Mrs Claire Spence, said the students were both honoured and delighted to be part of such an historic and memorable occasion. “To have such a tangible connection to these historic commemorative services is a great privilege,” she said.

Students and schools involved have received information researched on the soldier where their cross is to be laid. This gives the students a further connection to the ANZAC spirit through an in depth knowledge about ‘their’ soldier; so their involvement doesn’t end with the cross.

Our Lady’s Catholic School Longreach have been advised that their soldier is; Lieutenant John Powe Roberts Gallipoli, Walker’s Ridge Cemetery, Grave Reference: Sp. Mem.19. St Joseph’s Catholic School Blackall have been advised that their soldier is; Major Dugald Maxwell Lockwood Graham Gallipoli, Quinn’s Post Cemetery, Grave Reference: A. 31

St Joseph’s Catholic Primary School Barcaldine have been advised that the service person they have adopted is: Private Glanville Henry George Rolls, Western Front, Villers Bretonneux Memorial. Their cross with their message, along with a poppy and Australian flag, will be placed on his grave or memorial.

“The Anzac Day tradition is still so important to all Australians, and for these students of the next generation to have this rare opportunity to participate in such a wonderful project will certainly go a long way to ensuring the tradition remains a treasured part of our nation’s history,” Mrs Spence said.