

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY
THURSDAY 26TH MARCH 2015
ANZAC DAY

Mr PEDERICK (Hammond) (12:46): I rise to the support the motion that this house:

(a) recognises that ANZAC Day, 25 April 2015, commemorates the centenary of the landing of Australian and New Zealand forces at Gallipoli on 25 April 1915;

(b) pays its collective respects to the 416,809 Australians who enlisted in the Australian Imperial Force and the millions of others who fought in support of the defence efforts of this country since; and

(c) remembers all Australian service men and women, support personnel and animals that have been injured, traumatised or killed in action.

Noting the time we have today and the many members who want to speak, I will try to be brief. What this country went through was just amazing. Nearly 10 per cent of the population enlisted to fight in the Great War, as it was termed at the time—the 'war to end all wars'. It was a fantastic—probably 'fantastic' is the wrong word—

Mr Gardner: Fantastic in the true sense of the word.

Mr PEDERICK: Yes. It was unbelievable to think that so many people would put their life on the line. We note that 60,000, sadly, never came back to these shores. Quite frankly, I am not sure if everyone knew what they were quite in for when they left.

I want to quote from some letters. It is amazing that I have copies of letters from the Somme in 1917-18 from my great-uncle Joe and another friend of the family. I will read an extract. The letter says it is from 'somewhere in France', and I am pretty sure it is dated 5 November 1917. Writing to my grandparents, he says:

Dear Len and Dos,

Your letter reached me just over a week ago. A good long time in the line I had received no mail at all for some time. I said to a mate as we were edging out, 'I hope there's good mail waiting for me'. Imagine my delight on receiving 13 at once, as well as a parcel from home.

Well for the life of my I don't know what to write about as we are not supposed to mention military matters. All we 're doing lately has been near the line, so there's nothing to say.

Obviously, there was plenty of action. It continues:

Just at present we are not having a bad time , but of course you never know what will follow on tomorrow.

A family friend had a bit more to say and got a bit more past the censor. Again, this was from 'somewhere in France' but is dated 13 July 1916. The letter says:

Dear Mrs Pederick ,

I must say that I was very pleased indeed to receive such a nice pair of socks.

I am not exactly i n the firing line at present but I have had a good share of it. I hope to be in it again in four days' time. I have had some very narrow escapes, one of which only my hat saved me. Several times I have been covered with mud from big shells f i r i n g close, that within a few yards a little piece of shell went straight through my trousers and cut my knee, not serious but made it sore for a while. I had my own thoughts on war but I now know different because I have been in one myself. A party of us were ordered to raid the enemy's trenches, not a very safe job. The roar of the artillery and bursting shells was a night one could never forget. You didn't know what part of a second you might be blown to pieces with a shell or run through with a bayonet or shot with a revolver or rifle. There are lots of ways to kill a man in an instant in war.

It's miraculous how many of us got back, but get back we did, nearly every one of us. One of our chaps got blown to pieces right alongside of me with a bomb. That might give you an idea of what we have to go through at times, but my word, our lads are game!

I would just like to recognise my family members who have been in the military over time: Uncle Joe in the First World War; Uncle Oz and Uncle Les in the Second World War; Uncle Les again and Uncle Royce in the Korean War; and my brother Chris served for 23 years in Rwanda, which was upgraded to war service from UN service, and served in Iraq in 2005-06.

I visited France and Belgium in 2010. You really have to go there to get an eye for what has happened. What really amazed me was the fact that we were attacking uphill most of the time against fortified trenches because, obviously, the Germans had dug in to defend. It really brings home the loss. There are 3,500 cemeteries in France and Belgium, and you really get a picture of the true loss and what our people went through. I was fortunate

enough to find the grave of my brother-in-law's great-uncle. That was quite a moving moment.