



## HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

12<sup>th</sup> APRIL 2017

### ANZAC DAY COMMEMORATION (VETERANS' ADVISORY COUNCIL) AMENDMENT BILL

*Second Reading*

**Mr PEDERICK ( Hammond ) ( 12:59 ):** I rise to support the ANZAC Day Commemoration (Veterans' Advisory Council) Amendment Bill 2017 and note that it was introduced in the House of Assembly by the Minister for Veterans' Affairs to amend the ANZAC Day Commemoration Act 2005. The bill proposes to change the arrangements under which funds are allocated to community organisations from the ANZAC Day Commemoration Fund and to give the minister a greater role in the administration of the fund and final approval power for those grants. I seek leave to continue my remarks.

Leave granted; debate adjourned.

*Sitting suspended from 13:00 to 14:00.*

Adjourned debate on second reading (resumed on motion).

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** The member for Hammond is on his feet and has a maximum of 19 more minutes. You have almost started again, haven't you?

**Mr PEDERICK ( Hammond ) ( 15:41 ):** It's all my time. I rise to continue my remarks in regard to the ANZAC Day Commemoration (Veterans' Advisory Council) Amendment Bill 2017. The ANZAC Day Commemoration Fund has operated since 2005 and provides up to \$100,000 annually in grants towards projects that commemorate ANZAC Day. For the ANZAC centenary period 2014-16, the state has increased the fund to \$350,000 annually. The fund can also take on gifts and bequests. Since its inception, the fund has been administered by the ANZAC Day Commemoration Council. The council has both received applications for funding and been solely responsible for the allocation of grants with that funding.

There has been no ministerial role in the administration of the fund, including decisions about successful applicants. The ANZAC Day Commemoration Council will be abolished from 30 June 2017, with its functions folded into the Veterans Advisory Council, which has a wider role in providing advice to the government on the welfare of veterans. The commemoration council's abolition has been set in train following the passage of the Statutes Amendment (Boards and Committees—Abolition and Reform) Act 2015.

In the minister's second reading speech, he explained that, following the abolition of the ANZAC Day Commemoration Council, applications for funding will have to be made to the minister, and referred to the Veterans Advisory Council for its consideration and recommendation back to the minister. The minister will then make the final decision. The director of Veterans SA has explained that the Veterans Advisory Council would have to be reconstituted as a statutory authority if it were to be solely responsible for administration of the commemoration fund. He has further advised that the applications for the last funding round for \$350,000 have closed, and the commemoration council will determine these applications before its abolition and not the minister, but we certainly need that confirmed in the debate today.

Certainly, we owe a lot to all our past and present service men and women, and I want to reflect on a ceremony I attended the other day. I do not want to cause any distress, but I think we certainly need to further acknowledge Private Miller Mack, who was one of 21 Raukkan Aboriginal Ngarrindjeri community members who served in World War I. He served at a time when he was not even recognised as a citizen, and he served at a time when he could not even vote in elections in this country, so I take my hat off to him and to his brothers.

Private Miller Mack was born at Point McLeay in 1894. He enlisted in 1916 and fought in the First World War, serving in the 50th Battalion. He took part in the Battle of Messines, which precipitated the detonation of 19 large mines underneath German front lines, and he said that some of these explosions were felt on the English mainland.

Messines is an interesting place. It is one of the places I visited years ago, at the end of 2010. I was fortunate enough to get a guided tour through the battlefields of Belgium and France, and I think it is something that everyone needs to do. Certainly, with most of these battles, where the Australians and allies were attacking, they were literally fighting uphill, and it is fascinating to see. There is one location where there is a farmhouse and barn, with many tonnes of explosives still underneath it, and people just think, 'Well, it hasn't gone off yet, so it probably won't.' These large mines were used to devastating effect.

Something else that was used with devastating effect back in World War I was gas. Miller Mack suffered from tuberculosis, which he contracted during the battle because of a gas attack. He was repatriated to Australia, but he passed away in 1919 and was buried in an unmarked grave in Adelaide's West Terrace Cemetery in 1919. When the military section of that cemetery at West Terrace was created in 1920, Private Mack was not moved from his resting place.

As a local member, I was proud to attend the ceremony along with many brothers, cousins, aunts, uncles, family members and others. Many hundreds of people attended the event of the reinterment of Private Miller Mack's remains at Raukkan on 24 March this year, and I want to congratulate everyone involved because the reinterment would have taken a lot of organisation. I want to congratulate the RSL on their excellent work, and I want to congratulate the soldiers who took part in the ceremony on the day, and it was an extended ceremony.

Miller Mack was only exhumed that morning from West Terrace and brought down to Raukkan by Fulham Funerals, from memory, with an accompanying guard of honour. Those of us on foot met him at the gates of Raukkan, and we had a very nice service for him in the chapel that is on the \$50 bill of our Australian currency. When it came time to leave the chapel, he had full gun carriage transportation up to the cemetery at Raukkan, and then Miller Mack was laid to rest between his fellow World War I brothers with whom he had served.

As I said, it was a very moving ceremony 98 years after he died from illness contracted on the battlefield at Messines, and I was very pleased to be part of it, along with the Hon. Terry Stephens and the Hon. Kyam Maher from the other place. It really hit me that he was one of 21 who could not vote yet was prepared to fight and die for his country. As we know, many hundreds of thousands of people from Australia have gone to war for us and, as much as we dislike war, our people have served valiantly.

A great-uncle of mine served in World War I on the Somme, and three uncles served in World War II at Tobruk on Sunderland flying boats or on the *Shropshire* for the Australian Navy. It is amazing what you learn when you go to a family funeral. I did not realise that one of my uncles served not only with the Navy on the *Shropshire* but also with the Australian Army in Korea. Sadly, I did not know that until he passed away.

In more recent times, as I have mentioned in this place before, my brother served for 23 years. He was in the infantry, then he joined the engineering section, with service in Rwanda and Iraq. He is very proud and I am very proud of his service for this country, as we all should be of anyone who has served or is serving, and this is so whether or not they have been overseas.

We commemorate terrible battles, such as the ongoing bombing of Darwin, which was kept quiet at the time so that it did not spook the Australian public. Many were killed, not just servicemen and servicewomen but also civilians. The sad thing about sending people away, as has been stated

here recently, is not the damage you may be able to see: it is the damage that happens to these people that you cannot see.

I do commend everything our forces do. I hope that they do not have to go to any big escalation anytime soon or in the future, for that matter. They train well and they train hard. A lot of new armaments are being made for them to work with, including ships and submarines, and plans for projects like the LAND 400 for our Army and the F-45 project for the Air Force as well as other improvements are moving ahead to make sure that our defence forces are right up there with any in the world.

We certainly support this legislation. I think it is very important that we make sure that we appropriately commemorate all those who have served or who are serving for us and that we always do so in a very respectful way. Lest we forget.