

GENERAL SIR JOHN MONASH

Mr DAVID ELLIOTT (Baulkham Hills—Minister for Counter Terrorism, Minister for Corrections, and Minister for Veterans Affairs) (18:19): I acknowledge the presence in the public gallery of Lieutenant Colonel John Moore, OAM, RFD, ED. I thank him for his contribution to Veterans Affairs, and particularly Reserve Forces Day. As part of the Centenary of Anzac I have had the opportunity to travel around New South Wales—from Brewarrina to Balmain, from Cootamundra to Cessnock—collecting soil for the Anzac Memorial. During those visits I have been able to pay my respects to diggers across the State, both past and present. Nevertheless, today I am stopping to think about one digger—General Sir John Monash. I say at the outset that I am a great supporter of the posthumous promotion this year of John Monash one step up in rank to field marshal, which is known as the Jerilderie Proposition. It reads:

Following on the outstanding contribution of Sir John Monash to State and Nation before, during and after World War One and reflecting the fact that Sir John Monash received no Australian Awards or Honours post 11 November 1918, the Prime Minister approve by Government Gazette publication, the posthumous promotion of one step in rank of General Sir John Monash to the rank of Australian Field Marshal, with effect 11 November 1930, one year after Sir John Monash was eventually promoted to the rank of General.

In a letter to his cousin, a 17-year-old John Monash once wrote:

To what country and people do I owe most? To that which I have never seen, with which I have no connection, but that it is the home of some of my relatives? Or to that in which and among whom I was born, have grown up, where I have learned all that I know, to which I owe all happiness that I have experienced? Shall I, in return for this, look upon it as a foreign land, to be deserted at the first convenient opportunity? No, it is my native land, and I have contracted from it a heavy debt, and it will ever be to me a prominent object, in some measure to repay that debt.

Later, on 4 July 1918, an older Lieutenant General John Monash led 6,000 diggers of the Australian Army Corps and 2,000 American soldiers to a small but significant victory in the Battle of Hamel, freeing the Hamel village in only 93 minutes—just three minutes longer than he anticipated.

Monash had a striking quick-witted intelligence, an analytical mind and razor-sharp attention to detail. He was fearless in battle, took considerable risks and displayed an uncommon empathy for his troops. Following the war Monash openly declared that he wished only to give back to the community. He proclaimed one ought to "adopt as [their] fundamental creed that you will equip yourself for life, not solely for your own benefit, but for the benefit of the whole community". I hope that philosophy inspires and touches the hearts of all Australians. We should never take the defence of our nation for granted. We must always remember what our fallen and

our standing protectors have heroically sacrificed to allow our beloved nation to flourish today.

It is for those reasons that I call upon all members of this House to support the posthumous promotion of General Sir John Monash to the rank of field marshal by the end of the year, as a salute to one of Australia's greatest generals and a remarkable citizen. I thank my colleagues in the Commonwealth Parliament, both past and present, for their support of the move—particularly Tim Fischer, Josh Frydenberg and Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull, who said before his elevation to his position that he supported the promotion.

When I reflect on his life and service I think back to the "heavy debt" a young John Monash thought he owed to Australia. I think we can all agree that the debt was paid in full at the Battle of Hamel, which we will commemorate the centenary of this year. Finally, as a salute to all members of the First Australian Imperial Force in World War I and all soldiers who have served this country, including the 102,000 who gave their lives and the many Australian Defence Force veterans, I call upon all members of this House to support the creation of cemetery similar to Arlington Cemetery in the United States to immortalise the legacy of our fallen as part of the Centenary of Anzac.