

REMEMBRANCE DAY

Mr GREG WARREN (Campbelltown) (15:57): I am delighted to address the House on this matter of public importance to acknowledge Remembrance Day 2016. It is a day that not only marks the signing of the armistice on 11 November 1918 in the Forest of Compiègne, but it is a day when Australians commemorate one of the most significant days in our nation's military history. Last year we marked 100 years since the Anzac forces landed on the shores of Gallipoli. Like Remembrance Day, it is a testament to the significance of our proud culture that one century later we are still honouring the sacrifice of those gallant men and women who fought in the war that was supposed to end all wars. Tomorrow, on Remembrance Day, we honour the service and sacrifice made by many of our great nation whilst also expressing our gratitude to those service men and women who put their lives on hold—and on the line—for duty to ensure that the history of the Anzacs and the renowned Anzac spirit live on in the Australian psyche for an eternity.

As a new Federation, our national spirit was born in the landings of the first Anzac troops on the Turkish coast on 25 April 1915. Australia was a new nation, and as the men who landed on the shores of Suvla Bay stamped their feet in the sand our new nation stamped its foot in the history books, carrying the pride of our great nation without fear and giving no quarter. There was, and still is today, a spirit of mateship, courage, national pride, sacrifice, good humour in times of darkness and, at times, a healthy disregard for authority. Stories of the enigmatic Simpson and his donkey and many others are testament to these values. So recognisable are these traits that, across the world, everyday Australians are still painted with the values of the Anzacs.

Since Federation, Australian military forces have been involved in numerous wars, conflicts and peacekeeping operations. The service men and women in each of these operations have added to the identity of what it means to be an Anzac and, above all, what it means to be an Australian. One of the most significant legacies from the Anzac story is that it offers knowledge and understanding to ever-changing and expanding communities within our nation about the wartime efforts and the sacrifices that were made for this nation.

It is true that there is a story behind the service of every veteran, ex-service man and woman. Their stories are humbling, and I listen to them with pride. I must be clear on this point: throughout our communities we are fortunate to have so many who have served our country, States and local areas in so many different and varying ways. It is well known that my electorate of Campbelltown has a high population of ex-service men and women and returned service men and women. I am delighted that the Minister is here, as he would agree that not one of those people is more or less important than another.

I take pride in the fact that so many people want to attend the Gallipoli Anzac Day dawn service year in and year out. There was a particularly high attendance for the 100-year anniversary last year. There were not enough positions available for attendees at the services at Ingleburn, Campbelltown or Martin Place. The numbers

continue to expand. This stands as testament to the fact that for over 100 years the spirit, the sentiment, the contributions and the significance of the Anzacs have not left us. Rightfully, the school curriculum teaches our children about the veterans, the women who supported them and kept the domestic industries alive, the organisations that sustained troops and continue to do so, the struggles that our service people faced and continue to face, and why our national character was changed forever by that war.

At the going down of the sun and in the morning, we will remember them. Lest we forget. Pay homage tomorrow, as part of Remembrance Day. I thank the House.

Mr GREG APLIN (Albury) (16:02): Remembrance Day, 11 November, is set aside as a day to remember the sacrifice of those who have died for Australia in wars and conflicts. It was originally known as Armistice Day. On this day in 1918, the guns of the Western Front stopped after more than four years of continuous warfare. The Armistice, or end of hostilities, was actually signed in a railway carriage in a forest near Compiègne at 5.00 a.m., but it took six hours, to 11 a.m., to notify all fighting units. And so that eleventh hour of the eleventh day of the eleventh month, the moment when hostilities ceased on the Western Front, became universally associated with the remembrance of those who had died in the war. On the first anniversary of the armistice, two minutes silence was instituted as part of the commemorative ceremony. At the end of the Second World War the Australian and British governments changed the name to Remembrance Day as Armistice Day was no longer an appropriate title for a day that would commemorate all those who had died or served in war. In November 1997, the then Governor-General, Sir William Deane, issued a proclamation formally declaring 11 November Remembrance Day, and urging all Australians to observe one minute's silence at 11 a.m. on 11 November each year to remember those who suffered for Australia's cause in all wars and armed conflicts.

Over the course of this last year our forces, numbering more than 3,000 people, have been engaged in a dozen theatres of war and conflict, from the Middle East to Pacific nations and Sudan. They serve with great distinction and courage, as signified by the gallantry awards presented to a number of them for their deeds in battle. World War I remains our most costly conflict, in terms of the number killed and wounded. From a population of fewer than five million, more than 300,000 Australians enlisted, of whom one in five were killed. In the trench warfare of the Western Front tens of thousands of Aussie soldiers died. At Pozières, in one six-week period in July and August 1916, we suffered 23,000 casualties—almost the size of our entire regular Army today and almost half the entire population of Albury. During World War II, 39,000 Australian service men and women paid the ultimate price in defending Australia and preserving democracy. Following World War II Australians were called upon to participate in international operations in Korea, Malaya, Borneo and Vietnam. In these conflicts more than 77,000 Australians served with distinction and courage, and 910 lives were lost.

Only Australians aged 75 or 80 years and older would have memories of the horror of the Second World War and the enormous impact of the loss of so many young lives in such a short time. Every family would have been touched in some way by the tragedy. It is no wonder that, for older Australians, the war is a benchmark

against which life today is measured. It changed the whole Australian way of life forever, just as the devastating tsunami in 2004 changed forever the lives of our Indian Ocean neighbours. Our younger generations can have no real understanding of the hardship that people endured in this country over those war years. They take for granted the peace and stability that we now enjoy and are shocked and even resentful when restrictions are imposed and their tranquil lives are disturbed by bad news. They might not see as clearly as their parents the value of sending our defence forces into dangerous parts of the world to help restore peace there. That is understandable.

Modern warfare is no longer restricted to defined theatres, it does not follow set patterns and often it takes the form of terrorism, intimidation and indiscriminate slaughter of civilians. Our forces face a hidden enemy—one who uses remote control bombs to kill and maim. Extremist causes have adopted terror tactics and it is in this context that our uniformed men and women now have to operate. On this day of remembrance we will not only remember those who have died but those who continue to serve their country and indeed the world. This Remembrance Day I will attend the City of Albury RSL Sub-Branch Albury Remembrance Day Service at St Matthew's Church, Albury, where I will lay a wreath in appreciation of the sacrifices made by our military. Members of the community are warmly invited to attend.

At the same service a few years ago, one former soldier, Donald Sidney Dennis, who fought in the 2/6th commando squadron in World War II, was quoted as saying that the day was always sad for him, but that he came to remember those he lost in the war. "Your mind goes back," he said. "It's that you left behind your good friends and comrades. You can see their faces in your memory and you wonder why you're here and they're not," he said. We pray that not only will our service men and women return safely but that they will eventually be rewarded for their efforts and sacrifice by seeing peace and stability restored to these distant countries. Lest we forget.

Mr DAVID MEHAN (The Entrance) (16:07): Tomorrow marks 98 years since the Armistice which ended hostilities on the Western Front and across the battlefields of the First World War. People across this State, across this nation and across the western world will pause at 11 a.m. to remember the sacrifice of those who served and gave their lives in the First World War.

It is hard for us today to imagine the enormity of the Great War, and the toll it took on our community in this country and across the western world. In my own electorate I am reminded of our oldest community, the suburb of Ourimbah, which at the time was a small rural community. The men there worked in the local forests to get timber for the New South Wales railways. Seventy-four men—it must have been most of the men in the town—enlisted to fight in the First World War, and 16 of those did not return; they were killed in action. That is a casualty rate of over 20 per cent—higher than the average casualty rate suffered by the Australian nation. It was a bloody toll for that community and must have had a deep impact for those left behind and those who returned.

It is a matter of public record that it took another World War and more sacrifices before the western world committed collectively to building a better world

instead of engaging in disputes with other nations. It is important that tomorrow, 11 November—and in subsequent years—we commemorate at 11.00 a.m. what happened during World War I and at the end of the Great War. It is important not only to remember the sacrifices of our ancestors but also to ensure that when we as a society, and we as members of this House and representatives of the people of New South Wales, decide to engage in military conflict we do so knowing full well the horror of war and what it can cost our society. Lest we forget.

Mr DAVID ELLIOTT (Baulkham Hills—Minister for Corrections, Minister for Emergency Services, and Minister for Veterans Affairs) (16:10): By leave: At the outset of my modest contribution to this discussion, I thank the member for Campbelltown for drawing this matter of public importance to the attention of the House. Tomorrow is the ninety-eighth anniversary of the signing of the Armistice. As a Parliament, we should reflect on the fact that the Armistice was not the peace treaty. The Treaty of Versailles was not signed until 28 June 1919. Much has been and will be said about the length of time taken between signing the Armistice and finalising the Treaty of Versailles and how that contributed not only to World War II but also to subsequent conflicts.

Tomorrow is about us pausing as a nation. It is a time when millions of New South Welshmen and Welshwomen attend memorials to think about the sacrifice that led us along the path to peace, albeit briefly. The Government is committed to ensuring that those memories never fade. I pay tribute to the Premier on the eve of this year's Remembrance Day because of his genuine interest in and regard for veterans. Tonight the Premier will host a reception at Barangaroo for contemporary veterans whose ancestors were the original Anzacs. The reception will be for 600 veterans who served in recent conflicts in areas such as the Solomon Islands, Afghanistan, Iraq, East Timor, Bougainville and Western Sahara. The veterans will join the Premier and His Excellency the Governor at an event that will ensure that the heritage of which the veterans are custodians will not be forgotten.

Commemorating Armistice Day is not just about receptions and functions. The Premier has committed the New South Wales Government to completing the Hyde Park War Memorial's water fountain. The original 1930s design of the memorial had a water feature, but public subscriptions ceased during the Great Depression. It took Mike Baird and his commitment to our veterans community to fulfil completion of the memorial's original design. I very much look forward to its official dedication in 2018. Securing our veterans' future is a catch-cry of the New South Wales Government. The Premier has secured that by identifying 200 public sector jobs to be considered for the 2,400 Australian Defence Force personnel who are discharged from service in New South Wales every year. We can talk about memorials as much as we like—and of course tomorrow will be an emotional day for many people—but unless veterans are given comprehensive employment opportunities, their sacrifice may well simply be forgotten.

The Premier, the Deputy Premier, the people of New South Wales and I eagerly await news of whether the Invictus Games Foundation, of which Prince Harry is patron, has decided to hold the Invictus Games in New South Wales. If so, that is another way in which the people of New South Wales will be able to honour the service of our veterans and fulfil our duty of remembrance. Lest we forget.

Mr GREG WARREN (Campbelltown) (16:13): In reply: I thank the Minister for Corrections, Minister for Emergency Services, and Minister for Veterans Affairs, the member for Albury and my colleague the member for The Entrance for their contributions to the discussion of this matter of public importance. The Minister referred to the more contemporary elements of providing support to ex-service men and women and returned service men and women. Over a decade, more than 200 ex-service personnel have taken their lives. Clearly, that is a standard we cannot accept. We must provide support for service personnel who return from various conflicts bearing internal and external scars.

This year it is also important to remember and reflect on our proud service in theatres of conflict. It is 100 years since the Battle of the Somme, 75 years since the Siege of Tobruk, 65 years since the Battle of Châtillon, where the 3rd Battalion represented the first instalment of the Australian Regular Army since its establishment, and 50 years since the Battle of Long Tan, where young Australian servicemen ran through a rubber plantation. Without rear-echelon support from Australian, New Zealand and United States artillery fire, we probably would have lost each and every one of those men. Without doubt, it was one of the bloodiest battles of the Vietnam war and is something we must never forget. The list of historic battles and victories serves to highlight the importance of supporting Australia's returned service men and women.

It is 25 years since Australian service personnel were sent to the Gulf War. It is 15 years since Australian troops headed back to the Middle East, in Iraq and Afghanistan, and since Australian troops served in other conflicts, such as in the Solomon Islands, Bougainville and East Timor. Even during the Boxing Day tsunami, Australian service personnel provided support in the true spirit of humanity—stepping up to the plate and giving people the resources and the support they need in the face of adversity. As members of this House know, ultimately that is a fundamental, key and strong attribute of our unique and proud Australian character. Australians stand up for those who cannot stand up for themselves, we speak for those who cannot speak for themselves, and we provide the muscle for the weak in their time of need. I thank all members who contributed to this discussion. I appreciate the opportunity to mark this most honourable and respected day.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The discussion of the matter of public importance having concluded, the House will now proceed to community recognition statements.