

ANZAC COMMEMORATION

Mr DAVID ELLIOTT (Baulkham Hills—Minister for Counter Terrorism, Minister for Corrections, and Minister for Veterans Affairs) (12:28): As the member for Baulkham Hills—which is probably the best job I have ever been offered—and also as one of only two members of this House who have been on operational service overseas with the Australian Army, together with the Minister for Planning, I speak on behalf of our veterans. In that context, I advise the House that I had the pleasure of joining the Governor in attending Archbishop Anthony Fisher's moving requiem mass on the eve of Anzac Day at which he commended the souls of our fallen soldiers. On Anzac Day, I joined the Governor, the Premier and 25,000 community members at a dawn service. Despite the report in the *Australian Financial Review* gossip column, I was not missing in action. In fact, I attended not only that dawn service but also another service conducted by my sub-branch along with the member for Castle Hill. That is a true reflection of the importance of the day. I commend Brigadier Phil Bridie of Castle Hill RSL for overseeing that event.

It is disappointing that Anzac Day was marred by the ongoing investigation into the NSW RSL State Council. I asked the RSL members under investigation not to take a leadership role in any of the services and marches. I found their presence distracting, and it turned a day of commemoration into a media circus. I was horrified to learn that those under police investigation—the very men I asked not to take a leadership role in this year's Anzac march—have now sacked the chief executive officer, Glenn Kolomeitz. Glenn is the type of veteran we want in the RSL. He is a decorated soldier who began his career in the Royal Australian Air Force and who went on to be commissioned. He then joined the NSW Police Force and went on to serve in a policy role in the office of the Labor shadow Minister for Defence. He is also a legal practitioner and an active member of his sub-branch. In fact, he is a veteran of whom we should all be proud. He is a man with a remarkable empathy for modern veterans—that is, the veterans that those in control of the RSL told me they wanted to attract. Glenn is the type of veteran whom we should raise up and who should be in leadership roles, not dragged down as has happened. Despite his record, he is defending his position from men who themselves are under investigation for a range of wrongdoing. Their calling into question the credibility of good men like Glenn Kolomeitz is beyond belief.

I welcomed Luke Foley's intervention in the NSW RSL investigation last week via Twitter. He said that he would like to work in a bipartisan manner to clear up the RSL. That was in stark contrast to the approach taken by his shadow Minister for Veterans Affairs, the Hon. Lynda Voltz, who in October last year condemned my calls for reform of the NSW RSL as a "State Government asset grab". She said she was "concerned that the NSW Government now is looking to intervene in an area with a large stock of assets, with little justification". She was defending the RSL, which is now under investigation. The shadow Minister's comments not only were personally insulting to me as a former serviceman but also were a slanderous affront to the good men and women of RSL sub-branches across New South Wales who are the real victims of the poor leadership of some of those on the NSW RSL board.

