



Speech by

Mr G. HEALY

MEMBER FOR TOOWOOMBA NORTH

Hansard 25 November 1999

ANZAC DAY AMENDMENT BILL

Mr HEALY (Toowoomba North—NPA) (11.50 a.m.): I will be very brief with my comments, because I know that there are other members, including the honourable member for Burleigh, who are quite eager to make a contribution. I am sure that it will be a very good, valued and important contribution to this debate. To echo the comments of the member for Clayfield, the Opposition will be supporting this legislation, which gives the Anzac Day Trust Fund some security for its future work. The trust collects and disburses funds for the general welfare of ex-servicemen and ex-servicewomen, their dependents and related associations.

We also recognise that in the past funding has come from various means, such as general licences under the Liquor Act and Anzac Day race day crowds. If it is a rainy day on Anzac Day, that could affect the amount of money raised on that particular race day. We must also remember that, apart from the major carnivals, attendance figures for race crowds around Queensland on any day—whether it be Anzac Day or other days—are dropping. The concept that the Anzac Day Trust Fund receive some security of funding is a very good and sensible one. I congratulate the Minister on this initiative.

I recognise that there is the ability for organisations to make voluntary donations to the trust, especially businesses or any other activities that are permitted to operate on Anzac Day. We do not all realise that that happens. I certainly do not think that it is promoted enough. Although there is no compulsory levy on businesses or other activities that benefit from opening and operating on Anzac Day, neither is there too much promotion of the opportunity to make a donation. Members of the general community may not be aware that they have the opportunity, if they wish, to donate money to the trust through those organisations. It would be a worthwhile initiative if the Government and the department used some funding to promote further that fact. I am sure that there are many people in the community who would donate to the trust if they knew that they could.

I turn now to the RSL located in my electorate of Toowoomba North, that is, the Harlaxton RSL. On Saturday, 4 December, I will attend its annual reunion, which I attend every year. Each year I am given the honour of proposing the toast to the RSL at that function. At this year's function I was hoping to be able to present them with some good news about a certain other piece of legislation in relation to Anzac Day. Unfortunately, I may not be able to present them with the news that they wanted, although given the events of last night it was very close. Mr Speaker, as Justin Langer and Adam Gilchrist commented to each other as they went out to bat the other day, you just never know.

The Harlaxton RSL is a very fine RSL. It is situated in a low socioeconomic area of the city. It has an extremely strong base. It is a great group. As an attachment to the club, it has a brass band. We have two very good brass bands in the city, the Toowoomba Municipal Brass Band and the Harlaxton RSL Brass Band. That group of musicians was formerly involved with the former 25th RQR Brass Band. Although the main city band, the Toowoomba Municipal Brass Band, is a champion band and wins many awards throughout Queensland, the Harlaxton RSL Brass Band exists simply for entertainment. They do a great job. I acknowledge people such as Ron Mackenzie, Terry Muller, the Kemp brothers, Mike Gowdie and many others for the way that they have been able to bring those musicians together in a very fun way. It is certainly great to see them perform—whether it be on Anzac

Day, during the Toowoomba Carnival of Flowers or at the RSL—for the sheer entertainment of the patrons. It is a great band; they have a lot of fun.

Every little community has its own brass band. When one talks to band members and asks them about their major cost, one discovers that it is the replacement of instruments. If members know anything about musical instruments, they will know that they cost an absolute fortune. Those bands can generate only a little bit of money through donations, raffles or whatever. When the time comes to try to replace some of those instruments, they find that it could cost thousands of dollars per instrument. Recently the Harlaxton RSL Brass Band was quite lucky to have gained a grant from the Gaming Machine Community Benefit Fund to replace some of its instruments. Brass bands are another one of those great community activities that provide entertainment to the general public. In true community spirit, they get together and do a lot of work fundraising. They do a lot of performances for free, because of their community involvement. Whether it is a city band or a band that is associated with the RSL itself, they do a fine job. I acknowledge that.

The Anzac Day Trust works in well with Legacy, which is another very important organisation that does a great job of providing support for the spouses of those fine men and women who have lost their lives in war. In Toowoomba we have a very good Legacy branch. I acknowledge the work that has been done over many years by people such as Terry O'Connell, Kev Zimmerley and Ted Stockley, former presidents of the Toowoomba branch of Legacy. They are always out there in Toowoomba selling their badges for Anzac Day and always raising money to ensure that the spouses and partners of the people who have lost their lives or have been ill or infirm are looked after. We need to continue to support those organisations, because they are so terribly important.

As I mentioned earlier, I think it is a good initiative to give security to the Anzac Day Trust Fund. We will be supporting this legislation. I am certain that other members will want to talk about the Anzac Day and RSL activities in their electorates. I believe that the proposed legislation is well worth supporting. That is why we will be supporting this Bill today.
