



Speech by

Mr JIM PEARCE

MEMBER FOR FITZROY

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ANZAC DAY TRADING HOURS

Mr PEARCE (Fitzroy—ALP) (6.51 p.m.): I rise tonight with some feeling in my heart about this issue. Honourable members would know that I am the only returned serviceman in the Queensland Parliament, having served in Vietnam in 1969-70. I feel that I have done my bit for Australia as an Australian citizen. One has only to check my record to see that I did my job in South Vietnam with great honour.

I have suffered personally in many ways from being conscripted to be in South Vietnam and to do the job that the Australian task forces were asked to do. Along with many of my coppers, I copped abuse from the community when we came back home to this country. It took the 1987 welcome home parade before any of us felt as though we had received any recognition for what we were asked to do through conscription in those days of the Vietnam War.

My father also wears the badge of a returned serviceman. I can remember that, at one stage, he and I, as father and son, were the only father and son in a very big branch of the RSL. I believe that it is very rare to find a father and son as members of a Returned & Services League branch.

I have been attending Anzac Day services for 40 years because of my relationship with my father. I have attended Anzac Day services in the morning—the dawn service; I have attended the mid morning service; and, as a member of Parliament, I have attended those services and even afternoon services. I have attended as many as four services in my electorate, sometimes travelling for four hours after a dawn service just to get to another service. Never have I seen a service disrupted by a member of the public.

I want to be quite honest about this—and there will be people out there who will challenge me and will not be happy with what I am going to say—and I say this without disrespect to any of the diggers and their families, but the only disruption that I have seen at a service has come from some of the diggers themselves, not through disrespect but because they have had a couple too many and they were out there enjoying themselves and had to be pulled into line a little bit. I have never seen a member of the public do that.

After listening to the Minister tonight, I know that there has never been an official complaint to the Liquor Licensing Division about disruption to Anzac Day services, and no complaints have been registered in other States. Many RSL clubs trade from 4 a.m. I want to put this to the House tonight: are the representatives of the RSL, the returned servicemen in this State and the Returned & Services League asking us to legislate that nightclubs close at 12 midnight? What RSL clubs are volunteering to close their doors at midnight?

I have not received one telephone call about this issue as a local member. I have not received one letter. I have not once been approached in the street about this. I am upset, as a returned serviceman, that this has become a political issue. It should not become a political issue. There is no need for it to become a political issue. The issue has got out of hand because people on radio stations have been telling the people of Queensland to get on their telephones and ring their local members at home and complain about the issue that was raised by the member for Gladstone. I am not offended by what is happening here, and I hope that this House shows commonsense and votes accordingly tonight.

Time expired.
