Speech by

Mr J. HEGARTY

MEMBER FOR REDLANDS

VIETNAM VETERANS DAY

Mr HEGARTY (Redlands—NPA) (7.15 p.m.): Yesterday's celebration of Vietnam Veterans Day saw a well-attended march through the City of Brisbane led by the Governor, Major-General Peter Arnison, himself a Vietnam veteran. This was followed by a ceremony at the cenotaph in Anzac Square. Later in the day, a remembrance ceremony was held at Cleveland, where veterans from my electorate and other nearby electorates gathered to honour fallen comrades who served their country well in their youth. Vietnam Veterans Day is held on 18 August to coincide with Long Tan Day—the anniversary of the biggest and costliest action Australian troops were engaged in during the Vietnam conflict.

The ceremony at Cleveland was organised by the Redlands Vietnam Veterans Group, which has recently been formed by more than 100 former sailors, soldiers and airmen who served in Vietnam. There is also a support group, chiefly comprising wives of veterans, who are enthusiastically fundraising for the group.

The objective of the Redlands Vietnam Veterans Group is to provide support for veterans by holding weekly meetings, organising social occasions and helping those seeking recognition by the Department of Veterans' Affairs of war-related disabilities. This is being achieved through the group's welfare and pension officers, who help all veterans. A library service for veterans in hospital is under way, as is a home maintenance service for veterans who are disabled or in hospital.

At yesterday's Cleveland ceremony, which I was pleased to be able to attend, a distinct improvement in spirits was noticeable among veterans. I know that some of them have fallen on hard times or are in ill health. The comradeship offered by the new group is a real boon. Yesterday's activities in Brisbane and elsewhere have proved to be a positive step in recognising the contribution made by a generation of Australians until recently largely ignored.

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