



Speech by

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WORLD WAR II VETERANS

Mrs ATTWOOD (Mount Ommaney—ALP) (2.20 a.m.): Last Sunday I had the privilege of attending the anniversary celebrations of the Allied victory in the Pacific. The 54th anniversary of the end of the Pacific war contrasted greatly with the celebrations of four years ago. The 50th anniversary was marked by exhibitions depicting women in war and the famous troop train that travelled the length of the State. I vividly remember the photographic exhibition celebrating the efforts and endeavours of women. These women were depicted driving trucks, supplying troops and running farms while the menfolk were away. They were also depicted performing important nursing duties for wounded soldiers and kept the wheels of industry turning by working as mechanics, welders, fitters, electricians, assembly line workers and all manner of other technical occupations. The troop train transported veterans along the coastal rail route. The train stopped at most of the towns, hamlets and sidings that the troop train stopped at during the Second World War. I am sure that many honourable members would remember the significant commemorative events. Over 400,000 people visited that exhibition.

It is proper to celebrate the achievements of those who risked their lives and sometimes paid the ultimate price for their country. At the time, there were many reports in both the print and electronic media covering these events. This media coverage also encouraged the younger post war generation, including me, to discover more about this heritage and the sacrifices made in securing our great country and our freedom. This extensive media coverage contrasted greatly with the amount of coverage provided last Sunday. Not one representative of the media, either television, radio or newspaper, attended the 54th anniversary celebration at Anzac Square. I am sure that honourable members would agree that we must recognise the efforts, sacrifices and achievements of our veterans.

The number of Second World War veterans is steadily decreasing. It will not be too long before these anniversaries will be held without any of the original participants present. I think the media should make the most of these opportunities to celebrate and remember these fine former servicemen and women who risked their lives to give us the peace that we experience today. Let us not forget.

Our war memorials were built to last and are a constant reminder to us of those who died for our country and fought for our freedom. There are many war memorials to commemorate our soldiers, but what of our nurses who also risked their lives in war-torn countries? Some of these war nurses died whilst tending to the wounded. Some were captured and became prisoners of war. Yes, they also fought for our country and took care of our soldiers. To me these women are also our heroes. They have some interesting stories to tell about their time in the service and their horrific experience in the war prisons.

At present, some of them are travelling around the country gathering support and funding to build their own war memorial in Canberra. It was a great pleasure for me to meet one of these extraordinary women at a VIEW Club meeting a number of weeks ago. I came out of the meeting wondering how this brave woman actually survived the experience and how she even managed to talk about her experience without displaying her emotions.

It seems that these nurses have been forgotten and their achievements have not been fully recognised. The Returned & Services League has already contributed to this campaign to build a war memorial for the nurses. Why should these women have to raise funds to build their own memorial? Surely the Federal Government should put its hands in its pockets and build this memorial for them.

What is the problem? Has the Federal Government become as lax as the media in relation to adequate recognition of the efforts of these individuals? How quickly we forget. When somebody wins a tournament, we do not ask them to buy their own trophy. These war nurses deserve to be remembered, too. I am sure honourable members would agree that it should be the national Government that builds this memorial—without question, without restraint, and without contribution from the nurses. We should all support the men and women who fought in World War II in all their various capacities. May they long be remembered by us and by future Governments.
