



Speech by

Mrs E. CUNNINGHAM

MEMBER FOR GLADSTONE

Hansard 11 March 1999

ANZAC DAY TRADING HOURS

Mrs LIZ CUNNINGHAM (Gladstone—IND) (5.28 p.m.): I move—

"That this House will, as a matter of urgency, ensure necessary changes are made to licences attached to all licensed premises including those operating under a cabaret licence to restrict their trading hours to 12 midnight on the evening prior to Anzac Day."

I, too, would like to thank the Labor Party for allowing time out of Government Business to ensure that this motion can be debated. Page 3 of the Anzac Day Act of 1995 says that Parliament's reasons for enacting this Act are—

- "1. On 25 April 1915, troops of the Australian and New Zealand Army Corps landed on the shores of Gallipoli and, although confronted by overwhelming circumstances, fought courageously and defiantly.
2. This Act commemorates the bravery shown by those troops and of all members of the Australian Defence Force who have been involved in wars and armed conflicts for their country. "

In moving this motion, I am seeking only to ensure that the intent of that Act is achieved without impediment.

Prior to the last election I moved another notice of motion which said—

"That this House—

expresses its gratitude to all servicemen and women in all arenas of conflict;
values the opportunity on Anzac Day to both honour the memory of those who paid the ultimate price and express our gratitude to returned servicemen and women; and
calls on Government to review business trading hours so that the majority of businesses restrict trading on Anzac Day to commence at 1 pm as a mark of genuine respect."

My sentiments have not changed.

Last year a small group stumbled out of a local nightclub, one of two in proximity to the Gladstone RSL, and proceeded to heckle and jeer returned servicemen and women mustering at the RSL for a gun barrel breakfast and proceeding from there to the cenotaph for the dawn service. Of all services, the dawn service carries the greatest solemnity. In April 1998 Peter Morley wrote in the Courier-Mail—

"Mr Borbidge attended last Saturday's dawn service at Surfers Paradise where there were complaints about the behaviour of people who had been at licensed premises."

Mr Borbidge said—

"We accept the need for respect on Anzac Day, for its traditions and for those men and women who have served their country."

The article continued—

"Deputy Opposition Leader Jim Elder said the Government would get bi-partisan support but the Registered and Licensed Clubs Association said the move was a knee-jerk reaction."

Gladstone's experience was not a one-off. However, disappointingly, in October 1998 the member for Bundamba, Mr Gibbs, said during the debate on the Appropriation Bills—

"I am not going to be part of any move to reduce trading hours on the evenings of Anzac Day, Good Friday or Christmas Eve. The simple reality is that, if we did that, we would become the laughing-stock of this country.

...

Our liquor licensing laws are now recognised as among the very best in this nation. It is certainly not my intention to change them simply because some yobbo happened to disturb a dawn service somewhere in Queensland and the former Premier happened to be offended by it."

I would like to say that it was not just an isolated incident and it was not just the former Premier who was offended by it.

I believe that Queensland would not become a laughing-stock at all. The motion tonight deals only with Anzac Day. Already, hotels have to close at midnight on Christmas Eve, on the eve of Good Friday and on the eve of Anzac Day. Anzac Day has been singled out in my motion because that is the time when groups of people, diggers and their supporters, are expected to be congregated in any numbers in the early hours of the morning. That does not happen as a matter of course on Christmas Eve or on Good Friday eve.

Support for the remembrance of Anzac Day is growing markedly. Young people are attending commemorative events in increasing numbers and it is essential that as decision makers we ensure such a solemn remembrance can be conducted without the insulting and disrupting influence of people who leave late-licensed premises in an inebriated state.

Our war statistics are horrendous. In World War I, out of a population of fewer than five million, 58,000 Australians were killed and 142,000 were injured. In World War II, out of a population of just over seven million, 39,000 were killed on active duty. In the Boer War, 606 were killed or died of illness, disease or wounds. In the Korean War, 359 were killed. When Australia withdrew from Vietnam in 1971 some 500 had been killed. In World War II, 550,000 men and women were mobilised. In the Vietnam War, 8,000 were mobilised.

As has been stated, hotels already close at midnight for Christmas Eve, Good Friday and Anzac Day. My motion seeks a reduction of approximately just four hours' trading on one day per year only, on a day when people are most likely to congregate in the early hours of the morning. This is intended as a mark of respect for those who did not return, for the families of those who died and for returned servicemen and women of all the forces and in all the theatres of war. I have to ask the question: is four hours so much? In a statement supporting this motion tonight, the member for Toowoomba North said—

"It is inappropriate that Australians who are marking our nation's memorial day at the traditional dawn services should be inconvenienced or worse by a minority of irresponsible late-night revellers.

We don't want to disrupt the normal weekend activities of young Australians by closing night clubs early, but Friday and Saturday nights are only affected relatively rarely in terms of their being the eve of ANZAC Day, and we believe that price is worth paying to foster the proud rituals and traditions of our nation."

My father was in the war in the Pacific. He came back alive—I am thankful for that—but he carried with him a great legacy of memory. He does not tell us much about the war. He used to tell us the funny stories. He used to tell us about the fellas sitting in the latrine. They used to sterilise the latrine with petrol and they would forget and drop a lighted match into the latrine. He would tell us those sorts of stories, but he did not tell us about nursing his dead comrades and he did not tell us about the people he saw with their heads blown off. I have learned about all of that through reading books and seeing pictures.

Tonight we are asking for four hours, one night a year, to pay respect and to mark the sacrifice that those people made—not just men, but men and women. I think it is an indictment on all of us that the Government will not be supporting this motion. I hope the returned diggers in Labor electorates let their representatives know how they feel about that. I do not mean that in a vindictive way, I mean that we have asked for four hours, one day a year. That is not a great sacrifice.

It is often said that Anzac Day does not glorify war; it condemns the war maker. It does rightfully glorify those who nobly gave their lives in the various conflicts in order that we might all have peace with honour, friendship, freedom and goodwill. Four hours, one day a year is a pittance to show our diggers and their families in a practical way that we do appreciate their sacrifice, that we do appreciate their loss

and that we do believe that their lives mattered. Four hours: it is not much and it could mean everything.

I know that the clubs and the licensed facilities will complain, but they would complain no matter what we did if it restricted trading of any sort. The hotels already do it. They have done it for a period of time and they do not seem to mind too much. All we are doing is bringing other licensed premises into line with the trading hours of the hotels. I want to say to everybody who returned from war in any theatre and to their families that we do care. I want to say it, but I want us to show it by passing this motion. I commend the motion to the House.
