



Speech by

Mrs E. CUNNINGHAM

MEMBER FOR GLADSTONE

Hansard 28 April 1999

ANZAC DAY

Mrs LIZ CUNNINGHAM (Gladstone—IND) (11.20 p.m.): I rise to pay tribute to our returned servicemen and women.

Mr Veivers: Hear, hear!

Mrs LIZ CUNNINGHAM: I thank the member for Southport. Anzac Day 1999, I believe, continued the trend of increased interest by our community in commemorating this important occasion. Attendance at dawn services at Boyne Island and Gladstone in my electorate was significantly greater. The 9.30 a.m. service at Boyne was similarly larger, as was the 11 a.m. service in Gladstone. After the unacceptable events of 1998 and before, and in spite of the failure of this House to assist to date in a permanent solution to the problem of inebriated hecklers, the two clubs in proximity to the Gladstone RSL voluntarily closed several hours earlier, thus ensuring a problem-free day for diggers. I thank those clubs. I have heard that Anzac Day across Queensland was not problem free but there was a significant improvement on those of previous years.

Again, we recognised each person who has contributed to our freedom and peace. To those who died in war or as a result of war, and to all returned servicemen and women of all services, we said "thank you". We trust that they can continue to see the gratitude of young and old demonstrated by our attendance at Anzac Day services and that the due reverence for the day will continue unimpeded. However, special thanks must go to a number of people.

Right across Queensland we have parade marshals who, year after year, ensure that the parades run smoothly and without any undue complications. In my electorate and, I am sure, in other electorates, bands participate with great feeling and great emotion. The Gladstone Municipal Band and the Gladstone Pipe Band travel not only within the Gladstone electorate but also out to Boyne, Tannum and Calliope to participate in the memorial services. We have a group of young reservists who act as cenotaph guards. I commend them for their control and their input into the day's ceremony. They act with great dignity and great reserve.

I thank also the diggers. On the day, a number of diggers suffered from heat exhaustion. A couple were taken to the hospital in our area because of the heat. I thank them because, in spite of the weather conditions, they stood with great dignity and with great reverence throughout the services, which can extend for quite some time. I thank the local councils which contribute to the ceremonies by maintaining cenotaphs and memorials and by ensuring that park areas are available to the community to congregate in and to be able to properly remember this day.

I also express gratitude to the community. As I said, the communities at Boyne, Tannum and, I believe, Calliope—I was not there—and in Gladstone increased their attendance numbers. In part, that could be attributed to the extra publicity that surrounded Anzac Day. But the history of Anzac Day ceremonies over the last few years shows that the number of people turning up is continuing to increase. I believe that bodes well for the future and indicates the solemnity with which the community regards that day.

I thank the schools for their participation. Both the high schools and the primary schools contributed to the occasion. Many of the schools in my electorate and, I am sure, in other electorates held memorial services on the Friday prior to Anzac Day. They did that with great control. Mainly the

students took control of the program. They did that with reverence, respect and dignity—more than I can attribute to some members in this Chamber. I thank also the primary school students who turned up on Anzac Day. They sat through a ceremony—in some instances for two hours—and they also were exemplary in their behaviour.

I believe that the increased attendance numbers on Anzac Day are an encouragement to those diggers who have returned. Only three remain from World War I, but there is still a large number remaining from World War II, Korea, Borneo, Malaya and Vietnam. The increased numbers of people attending those ceremonies must give heart to those returned diggers to know that we, as a community, value their sacrifice and what they have done; that we value the fact that they cope with quite incredible memories day to day—memories that we cannot even begin to understand. It is important that they understand that we appreciate all that they have done to ensure our freedom and to allow us to express ourselves so openly.
