



Speech by

Mr M. ROWELL

MEMBER FOR HINCHINBROOK

Hansard 25 November 1999

ANZAC DAY AMENDMENT BILL

Mr ROWELL (Hinchinbrook—NPA) (12.16 p.m.): I rise to support this Bill because I believe that it is quite important. It really is about keeping the significance of Anzac Day alive. The Anzac Day Trust Fund is essential to many people throughout Queensland. Many of the RSL clubs in my electorate are very active, and there is no doubt that they do an excellent job.

The previous source of funding for the trust fund was abolished through amendments to the taxation laws. What was required was this grant that the Government is now providing of some \$795,000 in the 1998-99 financial year. Of course, there will be some CPI increments in the future. As well, people who want to contribute to the Anzac Day Trust Fund can do so voluntarily. Such contributions are a major source of income, if it is used in the appropriate manner. I believe that the fund is going particularly well, especially with the assistance of the people who are involved with Legacy and other organisations. Legacy is just another arm of the RSL, and it is critical for those service people and their families whose breadwinners have passed on. In some cases, they have no other form of income, and that is very difficult for them. Legacy does an excellent job throughout the State of Queensland.

In the past, one of the problems with keeping the fund alive—and the distribution of the funds—has been that, from time to time, because the main source of the fund was contributions collected on and around Anzac Day, weather conditions—particularly in my part of the world—played a significant role in the activities that occurred on those particular days. Downpours of rain often occur around 25 April. As a result, the funds generated on that particular day have declined to some degree.

I would like to mention some of the RSL organisations throughout my electorate. The Ingham branch is very active. During debate on a recent Bill before the House, members discussed Anzac Day and the various associated activities, such as dawn services, luncheons and that type of thing. Ingham is no exception. It holds a dawn service. Felix Reitano is very active. The events at the cenotaph there, which I mentioned last night, are quite significant.

I turn now to the Cardwell area. Cardwell is a very small town in a very picturesque area, but its RSL is very active. Some time ago, they were fortunate to have some land bequeathed to them, which was right on the seafront. They sold that land with the intention of building a clubhouse somewhere in the township of Cardwell. At one stage, an attempt was made to acquire land which held tennis courts. It was a very prominent and appropriate area on which to site a clubhouse, located very close to the National Parks Centre in Cardwell. I think that it would have been very beneficial for the RSL had it been able to acquire that land. However, that was not the case. People such as Andy Page and Bob Lang continued the process, acquired land and ultimately built a clubhouse, which is a very quiet little pleasant spot in which to have a drink. That facility is used for a range of functions that are held from time to time in Cardwell.

The RSL club at Tully is also very active. I would like to mention the contribution made to that club by Les Bunting. He was one of the prime movers in re-establishing the club in Tully, and he did an excellent job. He refurbished an old building. Initially, the people involved were considering acquiring another building, but through the management of Les Nash, who has been very active, they have a really excellent facility that is the focus of many events in Tully. It is an excellent venue. It has a great cafe that stocks food and beverages, which is great for the people of Tully because it provides them

with a place to go on a Friday night—or any night of the week—to get away from the usual activities that they are involved in in the town of Tully and its surroundings. That club has a great collection of memorabilia. It has General Douglas McArthur's corn pipe, which was donated to them, and many other great souvenirs, such as swords and pistols from wars gone by. That collection is an excellent display that adds a little bit of depth to the activities of the RSL at Tully.

The RSL club at Innisfail is very similar in that it is a very active club run by people such as Eddie O'Farrell and Errol Young. It is quite a large facility that provides an excellent venue for a range of conferences. Not so long ago the LGA for that northern region held their conference there. It is quite important for Innisfail to be able to have a facility such as the RSL club to be able to provide a venue for the holding of such conferences. I have been to a number of functions at that facility. The food and beverages that are provided there are very good and very reasonably priced. That facility provides a venue where people can go to, practically any night of the week, play the pokies and have a meal. I also know that the Rotary club holds their meetings there on a fairly regular basis.

These RSL clubs provide a facility in all of those towns that I have mentioned, and I think that the significance of Anzac Day is enhanced by their presence. Just recently, we spoke at some depth to the Liquor Amendment Bill, which relates to Anzac Day. I do not want to go into the issue in any greater detail than we have, except to say that I think that the important issue is that we recognise the significance of Anzac Day. We need this fund because it is critical for the arrangements that have to be made, in light of the taxation laws that have abolished levies, so that the RSL can continue holding the range of activities that they are so very much involved in for the betterment and assistance of people who have been involved in theatres of war over a long period.
