



Speech by

SHAUN NELSON

MEMBER FOR TABLELANDS

Hansard 14 April 1999

ANZAC DAY TRADING HOURS

Mr NELSON (Tablelands—IND) (6.46 p.m.): I fully support the motion moved by the member for Gladstone but I also agree 100% with the member for Kallangur. I think it is quite un-Australian to question the loyalty of anyone in this House by saying that they do not believe in Anzac Day. I am sure that every single member of the ALP has in their hearts a deep respect for what Australian servicemen and women have done over the years. I do not doubt that one iota. I think members of this House would not have been elected if they did not have respect for Anzac Day and the tenets of that day.

This morning and on other mornings we have stood for a minute in silence as a mark of respect for somebody who has passed on or just out of general respect. In bringing on this debate, I feel that we need to show that one day a year is sacred.

I admit that in the past I have gone to many Anzac Day ceremonies quite stonkered—well and truly above the legal limit. Everyone admits that it is your right on Anzac Day to go to a pub and have a good time and so on. But there comes a time in everyone's life—I have hit it a few times in my 26 short years—when you have to admit that you are wrong, that you have made a mistake, and be man enough to move on, or Government enough to move on. We need to say, "Here is an issue that we can rectify. We may have made an erroneous decision in the past by not supporting something. Let us bring on a bit of debate." I am not scared of a bit of a debate and I am sure that members on the other side of the House are not scared of a bit of a debate. We should give people their full allocation of time to have a discussion on the subject so that we can advance our points of view, those opposite can advance theirs and we can try to come to some sort of resolution.

I agree with the member for Kallangur that we should not politicise this issue. This issue is not about politics. People on this side of the House do not have any more or less respect for Anzac Day than do people on the other side of the House. We should be looking at the issue—that is what is important here—of whether we should be debating a piece of legislation. This is all very restrained, of course, because we have to be careful about what we say and how we discuss this. But the issue is that we should be debating this piece of legislation. The argument should be brought forward so that any changes that are hopefully made can be implemented before Anzac Day, so that people will know the story—where they stand before the law and what they can and cannot do. I do not think it is too much to ask.

Just as I said that everyone in this House has respect for what happens on Anzac Day, I do not think a single nightclub or licensed premises owner, or anyone for that matter, would mind forgoing a couple of hours' trading on Anzac Day morning, be it from midnight, 3 o'clock or whatever. I do not think there is a single person in this State, or any other State in the Federation for that matter, who would mind forgoing a few hours of trading straight out of respect, just as we stand for a minute's silence in the morning.

I have heard it said quite often in this Parliament that, "We can't do this because they didn't." One of the things that I was taught as a small boy is that two wrongs do not make a right. Just because they did not do it for 29 years, or because they did not change the legislation for this, that or the other reason, does not mean that this Government cannot. That is not a good excuse. That is not a way out. That is not a way of saying, "We don't have to do it because you didn't do it." That is exactly why people do not like politics. We should be above that. We should say, "Yes. They didn't do it, but we're

going to do it. We're going to make these changes because we know we can." Too often we hear in this House, "We can't do it because they didn't."

I fully support the motion. We have to consider the level of emotion and feeling of those members who have made speeches here tonight and say that this is an important issue. One disturbance of Anzac Day is far too many. By bringing on this debate, this is our chance to say, "No. We want to safeguard the traditions and culture of our nation in any way possible." It is a small price to pay. I guarantee that traders on the tablelands would not mind one iota, and the Government would win itself a great deal of kudos by supporting this motion. It is quite unfortunate that it does not support it. I ask the members of the ALP to feel that feeling in their hearts, to go above party politics and to support the motion put forward by the member for Gladstone.
