




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR CHATSWORTH

Record of Proceedings, 7 August 2014

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

World War I, 100-Year Commemoration

 **Mr MINNIKIN** (Chatsworth—LNP) (3.03 pm): This week as we mark 100 years since the start of World War I, I rise to reflect upon the sacrifices and contributions made by Australians to the war effort and the impact the conflict had on shaping our then fledgling nation. On 4 August 1914, little more than a month after the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand of Austria, the world descended into war. Australia embraced the call to support the 'mother country' Britain and its allies with Australian men enlisting in the military in droves. From Australia's population of fewer than five million, 416,809 men enlisted. In the four years of bloody conflict that followed, over 60,000 were killed and 156,000 were wounded, gassed or taken prisoner. As a result, our nation was stripped of many of our fittest and finest: those fathers, husbands and sons who never returned and may well have gone on to be our nation's future leaders. For those who returned home from the field of battle, a return to civilian life was seldom easy with many bearing physical and psychological wounds. Limited understanding of post-traumatic stress, which was simply referred to as 'shell shock' at the time, often meant that battlefield trauma took a heavy toll on the minds and bodies of returned servicemen and their families.

However, from the midst of the horrific conflict and loss of life, our young nation's identity began to develop. As Australians stood up and defended our freedoms and way of life, so too did they forge a national identity built upon the ANZAC ideals of mateship and self-sacrifice, born as a result of the abhorrent wartime conditions thousands of miles away from Australia's shores. All of us in this august House will be familiar with the bravery displayed by Simpson and his donkey, which is a story that has come to embody the ANZAC spirit of mateship. However, as extraordinary as that story is, it is merely representative of the courageous, selfless feats of many of Australia's soldiers whose stories were never told. And that is the essence of true Australian mateship as we understand it today: going that extra step, that extra mile, to support others while expecting nothing in return. In the words of the famous Australian writer and poet, Henry Lawson—

True mateship looks for no limelight ... it is the instinct that irresistibly impels a thirsty, parched man, out on the burning sands, to pour the last drop of water down the throat of a dying mate, where none save the sun or moon or stars may see.

A century on, sadly, we do not live in a world devoid of war and post-traumatic stress is still a heartbreaking reality for many of our nation's returned military personnel, their families and friends. However, a century on, Australia is a free, democratic nation with a national identity firmly grounded in the ANZAC notions of mateship and self-sacrifice. For this we owe an eternal debt of gratitude to those who fought to defend our nation in WWI and all conflicts since. I am proudly wearing a lapel pin which is inscribed with the following: 'Their Spirit, Our Pride 2014-2018'. Members, lest we forget.