




Speech By
Ann Leahy

MEMBER FOR WARREGO

Record of Proceedings, 14 June 2018

ADJOURNMENT

Roma, Memorial and Heroes Avenue

 **Ms LEAHY** (Warrego—LNP) (2.00 am): I rise to inform the House of a significant milestone that has been reached by the Roma memorial and Heroes Avenue, which will celebrate their centenary in September this year. It is 100 years since the dedication of the first bottle trees in Heroes Avenue. Heroes Avenue started on 20 September 1918, with the first 27 bottle trees, and later the avenue was extended by about another 93 bottle trees. Each tree bears a brass plaque stating the name of one of the 93 local men who fell during the First World War. Only one of these original plaques survives. It is now in a cairn that was dedicated by the Roma RSL sub-branch on Remembrance Day 1983. By then, a total of 102 trees comprised the avenue. The cairn is located outside the post office near the corner of McDowell and Wyndham streets.

The impetus for Heroes Avenue began with the mayor of Roma, Alderman Miscamble, who had been impressed by the avenues of memorial trees in the southern states. The bottle tree was selected as it was a species commonly associated with Roma. It is thought that the first tree was planted in 1918 to commemorate the death of a local soldier, Lieutenant Corporal Norman Saunders, who was killed in France in 1916. Trees were planted to commemorate the subsequent deaths and, although the plaques have disappeared, each tree retains its association with each soldier.

The cenotaph is located in Queen's Park and was commissioned by the local repatriation committee. It was unveiled on Anzac Day, 25 April 1938 by Colonel Sir Donald Cameron and honours the 93 local men who fell in the First World War and the 39 who fell in the Second World War. The traditional Anzac Day march moves from the Roma Railway Station to the cenotaph in Queen's Park along Heroes Avenue.

Australia, and Queensland in particular, had very few civic monuments before the First World War and Heroes Avenue was one of the first of its kind at the time. In 2003 the avenue was extended by another 37 trees. The avenue now has 140 trees in total. The RSL branch members have updated 88 plaques, including one new one and two that have never been installed, giving the avenue a permanent reminder to the ultimate sacrifice of all the young men who gave their freedom and for the free speech that we enjoy today.

I am very pleased to invite all members of the House to join the 100th year commemoration of the Roma Heroes Avenue on Saturday, 22 September 2018 at 10.45 am on the corner of McDowell and Wyndham streets in Roma. Lest we forget.