




Speech By
Hon. Mark Furner

MEMBER FOR FERNY GROVE

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ADJOURNMENT

Task Group Taji; Armistice Day

 **Hon. ML FURNER** (Ferny Grove—ALP) (Minister for Agricultural Industry Development and Fisheries) (7.14 pm): On 19 October this year I attended a farewell parade for the 7th Combat Brigade troops from the Gallipoli Barracks at Enoggera in my electorate of Ferny Grove. The troops are taking part in Task Group Taji in Iraq, an operation that is providing essential training to Iraq's security forces in their fight with Isis. Australian Army personnel who have previously served as part of Task Group Taji have contributed to the training of more than 32,000 Iraqi troops. These troops were instrumental in regaining control over Mosul from Isis in 2016 in some of the most brutal and bloody fighting of the last 15 years.

Today, Isis no longer controls any urban areas in Iraq, and that is in no small part because of the work and sacrifice of the Iraqi security forces trained by Australian Army soldiers. Iraq is still a long way from being at peace, but it is a much more stable nation today because of the contributions by serving and retired Australian Army personnel. Because of the support provided by the Australian Army, Iraq will soon be in a position to set its own destiny as a nation.

Active Defence Force personnel and their families make up a significant proportion of my electorate and I am proud to have them. Defence families go through a special kind of strain that few of our families ever experience. Their loved ones are often serving in difficult and dangerous locations overseas for months at a time, and they live with the very real prospect that they may not return home at all. Sometimes when they do return they are never the same again.

On Sunday we observed the 100th anniversary of Armistice Day. More than 1,000 people assembled in my electorate at the Gaythorne RSL near the Gallipoli Barracks to mark the occasion. More than 60,000 Australians gave their lives in service to their country in World War I. It is right that we should honour their memory, but we should never forget the thousands more who returned to Australian shores but never truly came home.

Today there is still a real problem faced by our returned veterans and their families. I would urge all members in this chamber to get behind organisations like Mates4Mates, Wounded Heroes, their local RSLs and other groups that provide support. Too often we mouth the words of support for our troops but fail to recognise the price they pay for that service when they attempt to return to civilian life. We can all choose to remember those we have lost, and we can all choose to do better for those who come home.