



Speech By  
**Brent Mickelberg**


**MEMBER FOR BUDERIM**

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Record of Proceedings, 24 October 2019

**PRIVATE MEMBER'S STATEMENT**

**Veterans, Homelessness**

 **Mr MICKELBERG** (Buderim—LNP) (2.12 pm): Mr Deputy Speaker, I quote—

We the people of Australia, respect and give thanks to all who have served in the defence force and their families. We acknowledge the unique nature of military service and the sacrifice demanded of all who commit to defend our nation. We undertake to preserve the memory and deeds of all who have served and promise to welcome, embrace and support all military veterans as respected and valued members of our community. For what they have done, this we will do.

That is the Australian Defence Veterans' Covenant that passed into law on Tuesday this week with the bipartisan support of the federal parliament. They are nice words, but words without action are meaningless. As a society we are failing our veterans and their families.

I acknowledge that goodwill exists throughout Australian society and on all sides of politics, yet all too frequently the soldiers that I served with continue to suffer and continue to die. Australian veterans are taking their own lives at a rate of nearly one each week. Australian veterans are three times more likely to be homeless than the rest of the Australian population. Australian veterans are crying out for help, but we are failing them. More needs to be done. I will not stand by and continue to watch my mates and their families suffer.

The Premier recently announced the establishment of an office for veterans, and I welcome that commitment, but I say again that words without action are meaningless. We have heard that the office of veterans will ensure that veterans feel connected to their communities and are assisted into new avenues of work when their time of service ends. Those are admirable and important endeavours, but nowhere did the Premier mention supporting veteran health and welfare. Not once did the Premier talk about fixing the veteran homelessness problem or dealing with the scourge of veteran suicide.

It is time for Queensland to uphold the words of the veterans covenant and do more. One area where Queensland can do more is in addressing the scourge of veteran homelessness. It is an absolute disgrace that within 400 metres of the Queensland parliament veterans who have served their nation are sleeping rough on the streets. We know that homelessness leaves people vulnerable to long-term unemployment and exacerbates mental health and substance abuse problems. As Mr Geoff Evans of Homes for Heroes states—

By the time veterans are getting to be homeless, their whole life has fallen apart, usually the last straw is family break down, then they're on the street and just a little bit further along, is suicide.

Keeping veterans off the street and in safe housing is something that together we can achieve. Goodwill and good intention does exist, but platitudes are not going to get the job done. I call on the Queensland government to work collaboratively to solve this scourge of veteran homelessness. When the Ode is read at your local Remembrance Day service in a couple of weeks time, reflect on the Australians we have failed, the veterans who could not take the pain anymore and their grieving families and those who battle on still.