




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR IPSWICH

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MATTER OF PUBLIC INTEREST

Fall of Singapore, 77th Anniversary

 **Ms HOWARD** (Ipswich—ALP) (2.39 pm): On Sunday, 17 February I had the honour of attending the Fall of Singapore commemorative service at the Shrine of Remembrance at Anzac Square. It was a really moving service which honoured 130,000 allied troops, including 15,000 Australians, who were taken prisoner by the Japanese in Singapore during the Second World War. The capture of these 130,000 allied troops was the largest surrender of British-led military personnel in history. Winston Churchill declared that the fall of Singapore was the worst disaster and the greatest capitulation in British history.

For 3½ years many of these prisoners endured unimaginable brutality working as slave labourers on projects including the Thai-Burma railway and at Sandakan in Borneo. Of the 60,000 allied prisoners of war who worked on the Thai-Burma railway, 16,000 died including at least 2,815 Australians. Most of the allied troops who were incarcerated at Sandakan died in a series of forced marches, and the surviving prisoners were not liberated until late August 1945, just prior to the end of the war.

Sometimes it is hard to fully appreciate the enormous suffering that these veterans endured and the sacrifices they made. It is, however, important that we continue to reflect on their service and tell their stories. I would like to acknowledge the 2nd/10th Field Regiment Association for its efforts in organising this moving and respectful event. In particular, I would like to make mention of Libby Parkinson, who has been organising the event for many years. This year's service had an extra layer of poignancy for Libby as she recently lost her father, Colin Clinch, in the last 12 months. He was 100. He was a member of the 2nd/10th Field Regiment and he was a prisoner of war himself.

For me, anniversaries of events such as these are also important reminders of not only our veterans past but also those personnel who continue to serve in war and peacekeeping operations today. I have been particularly heartened by the incredible efforts of our own Defence Force personnel in supporting the disaster recovery efforts in Townsville, home to many of their own friends, families and colleagues. The comradeship, mateship and spirit that our Anzacs showed over a century ago are still obvious in our service men and women today.

During my time as Assistant Minister for Veterans' Affairs, I have had the honour of meeting with many veterans' organisations and attending a number of commemorative services. Each of these opportunities reinforces the importance of what the Queensland government is doing to support our veterans and ex-Australian Defence Force personnel.

The Queensland government has made a number of commitments to better support our former service men and women including the development of a veterans' portal to make navigating relevant services across the Queensland government easier for veterans. We are committed to supporting veterans' employment and finding ways to better enable our veterans to transition from the ADF to

public sector employment. We have developed the Oasis Townsville facility, a one-stop shop for welfare support and employment transition services for ex-ADF personnel—something close to Coralee O'Rourke's heart and something close to your heart, Mr Deputy Speaker.

We have increased public transport concessions for Department of Veterans' Affairs white card holders. An extra 19,000 ex-Defence people now have access to concessions on transport. We have established the Queensland Veterans' Memorial Grants Program to help support the creation and upkeep of monuments, memorials and other public sites that recognise our veterans. The first round closes next Sunday, 10 March 2019 so I would encourage organisations to have a look online and be a part of that \$1½ million. The Queensland government has a long history of supporting veterans, the broader ex-service community and Queensland's war legacy. This government is committed to ensuring that veterans are honoured with dignity and respect and that their contribution and service are recognised.

I was very privileged to attend the recent Fall of Singapore commemorative service, and I would like to pay tribute to all of the people who organised it and all of the people who got involved, especially those who selfishly gave their lives to provide us with the freedom that we enjoy today.