




Speech By  
**Corrine McMillan**

**MEMBER FOR MANSFIELD**

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**QUEENSLAND VETERANS' COUNCIL BILL**

 **Ms McMILLAN** (Mansfield—ALP) (5.33 pm): I rise to support the Queensland Veterans' Council Bill 2021. In many capital cities of developed countries across the world, war memorials play an integral role in acknowledging the sacrifices made by men and women and their families during periods of conflict. Such war memorials afford a special place of remembrance of those lives lost and the stark reality of the human cost of war. This bill will ensure that Anzac Square is one such war memorial in which Queenslanders and in fact all Australians can be proud.

The historical origin of Anzac Square was the culmination of the broader Queensland community's response to the World War I. This tradition continued with the detailing of significant periods of conflict that followed, ensuring Anzac Square serves as a war memorial for all Queenslanders and visitors to Brisbane, the capital city of Queensland.

The bill proposes the establishment of a statutory body, the Queensland Veterans' Council. In accordance with the bill, the QVC will have responsibility for Anzac Square, in accordance with the role of trustee under the Land Act 1994. This bill creates a vehicle by which the Queensland government will take over the crucial responsibility of the day-to-day management of Anzac Square, our state's premiere war memorial.

The QVC will also have responsibility for the functions currently performed by the board of trustees for the Anzac Day Trust established under the Anzac Day Act 1995 that provides annual payments to institutions, organisations or associations that assist ex-service men and women and their dependants, recognising the very important role that veterans and their families play administering the Anzac Day Trust Fund. Further, the QVC will provide advice to government on veteran related matters—a role currently performed by the Queensland Veterans' Advisory Council. This means that the bill ensures that the Queensland veterans community are afforded a clear and direct pathway for communication with the highest levels of the Queensland government about matters important to them.

To support the QVC with formulating and providing advice to government on veterans matters, this bill proposes to establish a veterans reference group. This veterans reference group will be made up of 10 members, two of which will be the members of the QVC that have been nominated by veterans organisations and eight other members with knowledge, skills or experience in areas relevant to veterans including veterans welfare, health, military service and transition from military service. We on this side of the House understand the significance of the creation of this body and what it will mean for veterans in this state. This is a landmark moment where veterans, their families and their broader community will be handed an unprecedented amount of control and input in the management of their affairs in Queensland.

In addition, the establishment of the QVC ensures that strong governance and accountability arrangements are in place to safeguard the use of public funds in Queensland. Like for any board, it is imperative that the governance structure and membership of the QVC be inclusive of a wide degree of

skills and experience that can contribute to the successful administration of the body. However, it is also necessary in this case that this be met alongside a requirement for adequate representation for veterans, their family members and members of the broader veterans community.

Whilst the LNP recommended that the bill should be amended to remove remuneration for members of the QVC—the LNP suggest that instead they should receive reasonable reimbursement for their expenses only—the Palaszczuk government will not be supporting this recommendation. We believe that chairs and members of government bodies provide a significant contribution to the community through their participation on these bodies.

I welcome the amendments outlined by the Premier and the Attorney-General in response to the committee's recommendations which will (a) amend clause 13 (Membership) to provide that at least 50 per cent of the members of the QVC must be veterans or representatives of the veterans community; and, (b) amend clause 34 (Establishment of the veterans' reference group) to provide that the minister must, rather than 'may', establish a veterans reference group. Both amendments reinforce the Palaszczuk government's commitment to listening to Queenslanders and to our commitment to the veterans community to ensure their representation and participation in the QVC and the institutions it will administer. This is of the utmost importance to our government.

On behalf of the committee, I do recognise all members of parliament who have served in the defence forces, including the member for Southern Downs. I thank him for his contribution. On behalf of the committee, I thank those individuals and organisations who made written submissions on the bill. I also thank our Parliamentary Service staff, Brisbane City Council, the State Library of Queensland and the Department of the Premier and Cabinet. This bill builds on our government's commitment to veterans and servicing Queensland's monuments to their service and sacrifice. I commend this bill to the House.