




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR IPSWICH

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PRIVATE MEMBER'S STATEMENT

Ipswich Electorate, RSL Clubs

 **Ms HOWARD** (Ipswich—ALP) (2.58 pm): RSL clubs are the lifeblood of many communities across Australia. At a time when veterans' mental health and wellbeing has been highlighted as a major concern, we cannot forget the significant work they do to improve the welfare of their members.

Recently I had the great honour of attending the Ipswich Railway RSL Sub Branch's 85th anniversary. Since 1936, the Ipswich Railway RSL Sub Branch has proudly served the needs of its members, veterans and currently serving members of the Australian Defence Force. The subbranch was formed by returned World War I servicemen who were unhappy about the level of treatment that unemployed and injured diggers were getting. They are still fighting for better levels of treatment for their members today.

While the subbranch is well known for its Anzac Day service at the North Ipswich Railway Workshops, it also does other important social outreach work to ensure the wellbeing of its members. Volunteers are active visiting veterans in their homes and hospitals, organising over-80s lunches, providing bursaries to university and trade students, organising day trips and maintaining local memorials and war graves. The tireless dedication of current and former presidents, branch officials and members means that the Ipswich Railway RSL Sub Branch should be good for another 85 years.

The other major RSL in Ipswich is the Ipswich RSL Sub Branch formed in 1917, making it one of the first subbranches in Queensland. For over 100 years it has attended to the welfare of its members, preserved our wartime history in its museum at the Memorial Hall in Ipswich and played a major part in our city's commemoration of Anzac Day. That is why I was extremely pleased to see Anzac Day commemorative services and marches back on this year.

Anzac Day last year during the height of the COVID pandemic was like no other, but our RSL clubs and veteran groups rose to the occasion and actively promoted Light Up the Dawn Anzac Day ceremonies. Even the public got involved by getting up at dawn to pay their respects, which was fantastic to see. However, for many veterans, being able to commemorate Anzac Day the traditional way is important. Anzac Day is a special day to catch up with their mates and remember their fallen comrades. Observing the minute's silence and the *Last Post* with your comrades is a powerful experience.

Anzac Day ceremonies also allow our communities to come together and pay their respects to the fallen and to hear stories of courage and bravery. Importantly, it gives us a chance to pass down Anzac Day traditions to younger generations so that they are not lost over time. Our Anzac Day services in Ipswich this year were very well attended by the community. I was invited to several in my electorate, including services by the Ipswich RSL Sub Branch, the Eastern Suburbs Anzac Day Commemoration Committee, the Woodend Anzac Day service and a number of school Anzac Day services.

Ipswich's longstanding Anzac Day march was also back on this year and thousands came out to see it. A good crowd of young and old also turned out to the dawn service at the Ipswich Memorial Gardens. Ipswich's defence and veteran community is strong and plays a significant role in our community due to our ties with the RAAF base at Amberley, so a return to public commemorations is a welcome return to normalcy. It highlighted the need that we have to come together as a community.