




Speech By  
**Lachlan Millar**

**MEMBER FOR GREGORY**

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### QUEENSLAND VETERANS' COUNCIL BILL

 **Mr MILLAR** (Gregory—LNP) (5.19 pm): I rise to speak to this bill wholeheartedly in support of our veterans and wanting to give voice to their disappointments as expressed in testimony to the Community Support and Services Committee's examination of the bill. I also speak with the hope that the government will address these concerns with amendments to this bill.

As a newly elected MP in 2015, I was privileged to participate in some of the Anzac centenary celebrations across Gregory. In Gregory, the centenary brought Light Horse re-enactments, the commemorative troop train journey along the central western line and even the discovery of a previously unknown surveyor's map of the trenches at Gallipoli made by a young local man serving there. The discovery was so exciting that the national War Memorial came up to Emerald to work on the document. This man was the uncle of my constituent and a bloke I have known for a long time, Mark Murray, who founded Murray and Associates Land Surveyors and Town Planners in Emerald. I have been told that Mark's uncle was a message runner—so of course a map of the trenches was vital to his duty and his survival.

Coming from a surveying background, as Mark Murray does, he surveyed and mapped the trenches using a short piece of knotted string and a tiny notebook containing a beautifully drawn series of maps in proper survey notification. As the family wished to keep the original document in the local setting—that is, Emerald—copies were also made and the original document preserved. It changed the history books. Most of the credit for surveying maps had previously been given to a British officer who had been this Aussie's superior. The maps also gave historians maps for trenches where we knew the names but not the layout. During the Anzac centenary, there was such a great reassessment of mementoes like these diaries and letters home, which was good to see. While the challenge is still how to ensure their preservation, the overall effect was to underscore the living legacy of the Anzac legend across the seat of Gregory.

Our towns' young people were almost over-represented—as many here would know—among those who could truly call themselves Anzacs. The inheritance of the Anzacs truly lives on in the bush. Even the smallest towns have their Anzac memorial. Many of these actually preceded the Brisbane war memorial and were built from public donations. The Brisbane Anzac memorial is important and it represents the whole state, so this bill—to ensure its proper management—is welcome and will be supported by the people in my seat of Gregory. Gregory continues to contribute sons and daughters to our armed forces and contributes generously to the support of our veterans. They want to see our veterans accorded the respect and support they deserve.

It is that part of the bill that my constituents will expect me to speak out strongly about—the part about the Anzac Day Trust Fund. This fund allocates moneys to organisations who support our ex-service men and women and their dependants, so it is very directly and practically a matter of great interest and concern to our veterans. The bill will effectively remove their management of these funds and place it in the hands of public servants for no apparent reason. As was said by the LNP committee members—the member for Burnett and the member for Scenic Rim—in their statement of reservation—

The Bill ignores and removes the 100-year-old faith in the veteran's community to manage the Anzac Day Trust Fund.

Currently, the Anzac Day Trust Fund is administered by four people, at least three of whom must come from the veterans community. This ensures the voices of the veterans are heard and their challenges and concerns are properly understood. In that sense, it is both a moral and practical arrangement, but it is also an arrangement which properly reflects the community's respect for our veterans. Every single submitter to the committee's inquiry raised these concerns I am voicing here. The bill essentially does two things: firstly, monetary support for our veterans, their organisations, individuals and their families; and, secondly, the maintenance of the bricks and mortar of the Brisbane war memorial. In doing so, the bill risks the bricks and mortar of Anzac Square soaking up most of the funding. Clearly, this will then leave less funding for veterans support.

One of the concerns I have is that the bill replaces what is essentially a veterans board with a body made up of public servants. Of the eight members of the proposed Queensland Veterans' Council, only two will be veterans. They will not have the votes to set agendas and to ensure that agendas are resolved in a way most beneficial to Queensland's veterans. They will not even have the chairman's casting vote if the public servants find themselves deadlocked. This parliament should require good reason before dismantling 100 years of tradition. We have an obligation to our Queensland veterans, and this parliament should address this openly and honestly.

The LNP wants to hand back control of veterans issues to veterans. To that end, the position of chair should be filled by a veteran and the majority of members of the council should be veterans. The bill should be amended to clarify that the primary function of the council is to deal with veterans matters, such as the disbursement of funds from the Anzac Day Trust Fund. This should be its key priority, as was intended by its founders. With these changes, the 12-member veterans reference group, which is proposed to sit under the council in an advisory capacity, will simply no longer be needed. If this bill proceeds in its current form, the Labor government may be surprised at how widespread the backlash will be.