




Speech By
Hon. Mark Bailey

MEMBER FOR MILLER

Record of Proceedings, 27 October 2021

QUEENSLAND VETERANS' COUNCIL BILL 2021

 **Hon. MC BAILEY** (Miller—ALP) (Minister for Transport and Main Roads) (2.04 pm): I rise to speak in favour of the Queensland Veterans' Council Bill 2021. The Palaszczuk government will always be committed to our veterans and their families. That goes to the heart of this proposal to establish the Queensland Veterans' Council as a new statutory body.

I would like to acknowledge all of our veterans here in Queensland, including those in this chamber, on both sides of the chamber, for their commitment to our country and our community. Both my parents served in the RAAF—they in fact met there—so from a young age I have had a very strong understanding of the importance of our service personnel and our veterans and their role in our community and our country.

It is proposed that the Queensland Veterans' Council will become the trustee of Anzac Square and will have responsibility for its ongoing management and operation and that the Queensland Veterans' Council will have responsibility for managing the Anzac Day Trust Fund under the Anzac Day Act 1995. The Queensland Veterans' Council will also provide valuable advice to government on veterans matters.

The change proposed in this bill will mean that the Queensland Veterans' Council will be responsible for managing, maintaining and preserving Anzac Square as a memorial to honour the service and sacrifice of Queenslanders and other Australians in war, conflict, peacemaking as well as peacekeeping. The creation of the Queensland Veterans' Council hands over control of the monument to the men and women who served the nation in the Defence Force, their families and the broader veterans community. Currently, the monument is managed by the Brisbane City Council, the State Library of Queensland and the Department of the Premier and Cabinet and does not require direct involvement of veterans in the day-to-day decisions of the site.

The Palaszczuk Labor government has listened to the defence community. That is why we have accepted the committee's recommendation to give a stronger voice for service men and women, to ensure that at least 50 per cent of the members of the Queensland Veterans' Council be a veteran or a representative, to ensure that the Anzac Day Trust and Anzac Square are managed by veterans for veterans.

This is a landmark moment where veterans, their families and the broader community will be handed unprecedented input into the management of their affairs in Queensland. It beggars belief, to be quite frank, that the other side of the House have recommended the veterans serving on this body should not receive remuneration for doing so. I note that the member for Burnett and the member for Scenic Rim have questioned the appropriateness of paying remuneration to members of the Queensland Veterans' Council, implying that fair remuneration to these veterans and other members of the council not be provided on the basis that it may 'impact on their ability to provide unbiased advice and compromise their impartiality'.

As the member for Miller, I am always proud to participate in local events in honour of veterans and their families, run by groups in my electorate such as—I would like to acknowledge their incredible hard work, not just at the special event days of the year like Anzac Day but all year—the Stephens RSL Sub Branch based at Annerley, Sherwood Indooroopilly RSL Sub Branch and Yeronga Dutton Park RSL Sub-Branch, which runs the service at the Ekibin Memorial Park.

As the Minister for Transport and Main Roads, I am also proud to have made it easier for veterans to access cheaper public transport. Under that scheme, the Veteran White Card holders can access a 50 per cent discount on public transport fares across the state. This is in addition to more than 35,000 veterans who hold Gold Cards who can access public transport discounts. It is the Palaszczuk Labor government that has supported veterans and accompanying family members to travel free on any TransLink bus, train, ferry or tram service on Remembrance Day every year.

The Palaszczuk Labor government has also created an online portal for veterans in Queensland to support ex-service personnel and their families in transitioning to civilian lives. This can often be difficult for some personnel. It incorporates support service search engines and allows them to connect with the support they need, including employment opportunities, housing and accommodation services and support, counselling, mental health services and information on concessions.

We as a government understand the importance of supporting veterans and their families through tough times. I see this bill very much in that light—as a continuing commitment that we have to those who have put their lives on the line and who have sacrificed their professional careers in terms of defending our country. I commend the bill to the House.