




Speech By
Sandy Bolton

MEMBER FOR NOOSA

Record of Proceedings, 27 October 2021

QUEENSLAND VETERANS' COUNCIL BILL 2021

 **Ms BOLTON** (Noosa—Ind) (11.55 am): During the First World War and subsequent wars the men and women of Noosa answered the call and signed up to serve their country. Like many communities across Queensland, the residents of Noosa have paid tribute to these selfless men and women through war memorials which list the names of those who served in the First World War. The 2017 publication of *Noosa Remembers: A history of the World War I memorials of Noosa Shire* was co-authored by Joe Hextall and Jane Harding, who is the heritage librarian at the Noosa Library Service. It traces the history of the various World War I memorials that are located within our district and come in the form of parks and reserves, halls, baths, an avenue and a rotunda, as well as eight honour boards in communities including Pomona, Federal, Cooroy and Cooran.

The year 1922, nearly 100 years ago, was a really significant year for the shire. Two key memorials were erected: the cenotaphs in both Tewantin and Cooroy were dedicated. Every year on Anzac Day thousands of our residents gather to honour and remember. This publication is one of the many tributes that demonstrates how our community commemorates and cares for their war memorials—similar to the care given to the state memorial at Anzac Square here in Brisbane. It is a privilege to see the significant events and important memorials that commemorate the members of the Defence Force and their duty to our nation. I want to give a huge shout-out to the Cooroy-Pomona RSL Sub Branch, the Tewantin-Noosa RSL Sub Branch and the Coolum-Peregian RSL Sub Branch and their members and beautiful families and partners. What they do every single day is just incredible.

Anzac Square was dedicated on Remembrance Day 1930 as Queensland's state war memorial and was the culmination of the broader Queensland community's response to the First World War. The Queensland Veterans' Council Bill 2021 will ensure that Anzac Square is one of the war memorials of which all Queenslanders and Australians can continue to be incredibly proud. The bill will establish the Queensland Veterans' Council as a statutory body with areas of responsibility including: as trustee of Anzac Square; assuming the functions of the board of trustees under the Anzac Day Act 1995; and providing advice to government on veterans matters. The bill also provides that the QVC will have the function of administering the trust fund and deciding applications for payments out of that fund. This is funded predominantly by a grant appropriated from the Queensland government and provides annual payments to institutions, organisations or associations to assist ex-service men and women and their dependents. The bill does not alter the quantum of funding provided by government to the trust fund, nor does it alter the purposes for which payments can be made from that fund.

To support the QVC in the performance of its advisory function the bill also formalises the role of the QVAC as a ministerial advisory committee established to: provide a forum for the Queensland veterans community; communicate directly with the Queensland government; and provide advice on veterans matters.

Many submitters, including RSL Queensland, welcomed the establishment of the QVC as a statutory body to modernise the legislative framework for veterans matters. While supportive of the QVC concept, submitters are justifiably concerned that the act in its present form diminishes the Queensland

veteran community by not recognising the experience needed to manage Anzac Square and the Anzac Day Trust and to advise the government on matters that are very much related to veterans issues. Its proposed governance structure means the advice to government from veterans and veteran organisations via the veterans reference group is filtered by the QVC comprising six non-veterans and only two veterans. This thereby prevents the appointed veteran members from having a majority vote when it comes to decision-making on matters that specifically affect the wellbeing of veterans.

Submitters agree the proposed membership structure identified in the bill and the underrepresentation and involvement of veterans in this legislation raise concern. In response, the committee recommended the bill be amended to provide that at least 50 per cent of the members of the QVC must be veterans or representatives of the veterans community and provide that the minister must establish a veterans reference group. I will be supporting any amendments to this effect.

We rely on our veterans communities for the selfless commitments they make—in the memorials they care for, in remembrance, in the events that acknowledge the men and women and their families who make sacrifices for us—and the support that is desperately needed. In return, they should be able to rely on us. I thank the committee for their recommendations and work, as well as the submitters and attendees at the public hearing for their commitment to ensure we get this right. I give deep gratitude and respect to all those who have sacrificed and continue to sacrifice so much for all of us, and to their families and loved ones. Lest we forget.