



Speech By  
**Bree James**


**MEMBER FOR BARRON RIVER**

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**PRIVATE MEMBER'S STATEMENT**

**Far North Queensland Legacy**

 **Ms JAMES** (Barron River—LNP) (2.46 pm): I rise today to acknowledge and give thanks to all veterans, veteran families and veteran support services in our great country, but I give a special thanks to those in Far North Queensland. I am compelled to share their stories to share why we need to build a Legacy House in Far North Queensland. For men and women who serve our country, too often when they come home the battle does not end.

Far North Queensland is home to one of the largest veteran populations in Queensland, with more than 11,000 veterans living across the electorates of Leichhardt and Kennedy. In fact, our state has the highest concentration—nearly a third—of veterans in the country and with it, unfortunately, some of the most heartbreaking statistics. On average 1½ veterans suicide every three weeks. These are not just numbers; they are fathers, mothers, partners, children, lives lost and families forever changed. Mel, who works at Far North Queensland Legacy, sadly knows this reality. Her husband took his own life eight years ago—a powerful reminder of why this work is essential.

The support veterans receive in our community is commendable. I want to mention the Stratford Bowls Club, which hosts a once-a-month meeting for the TPI association. I also want to thank Michelle and Laurie Woods from Speewah Country Tavern, which hosts regular veteran events, including their annual Anzac Day dinner, which is an event that I really look forward to every year and brings together over a hundred dignitaries and veterans.

The Cairns RSL Sub Branch, led by president Nathan Shingles, is responsible for many beautiful commemorative events throughout the year in Far North Queensland, from the Indigenous Veterans' Ceremony I recently attended to Anzac Day, Remembrance Day and Vietnam Veterans' Day. This is also the largest RSL subbranch in the district, with over 700 members, 40 volunteers and three incredible full-time staff members—a true testament to its enduring impact in the community and the vital role they play in supporting and connecting veterans across Far North Queensland.

Another incredible organisation is Far North Queensland Legacy, which leads the way for veteran support in our region. The work they do is nothing short of inspiring. Under the leadership of Alfie Santos, Rebecca, Mel and others before them, Far North Queensland Legacy has been serving our region for nearly 100 years, supporting over 300 beneficiaries—from war widows and young children to veterans with mental health challenges. I look forward to the Far North Queensland Legacy fundraising gala in June.

Far North Queensland Legacy also founded the Legacy Links program, the only program across the entire Legacy network that assists veterans and their families in transitioning from military life to civilian life—a time when many need it most. What we need is a Legacy House, and Far North Queensland Legacy has developed a plan for one—a shovel-ready project that will create one central location for veteran support services. It will include accommodation, wellness spaces and administration. I am really backing this project. It is a place we need for our veteran community. I will continue to fight for funding for this important audience.