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HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

MOTIONS

Centenary of Anzac

SPEECH

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Speaker Prentice, Jane, MP

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Mrs PRENTICE (Ryan) (11:00): This year is a very special year for all Australians as we commemorate the 100th anniversary of the landings at Gallipoli. Communities all over Australia came together on 25 April this year to pay tribute to and remember those who volunteered and paid the ultimate price in the Great War and all the conflicts in which we have since been involved. It is often said our national identity was formed during the Great War, and in particular in the Gallipoli Campaign. When our soldiers landed on the shores of Gallipoli, Australia was a very new nation—eager to prove itself. We showed courage, sacrifice, mateship and determination—all qualities that Australians aspire to today.

While a lot has been said about the ANZACs and many stories have been told, I want to pay tribute today to those who made it all possible—to the historians, the archivists, the storytellers; those who have dedicated their lives to making sure we never forget. There has been some remarkable documentation of our Anzac history I commend the many organisations who helped to remind us all of the past and to understand what life was like a century ago.

Clearly, the most prominent reminder is the remarkable work of the Australian War Memorial. The Australian government provided more than \$28 million in funding towards the redevelopment of the First World War galleries to ensure all visitors during the Anzac Centenary could truly understand the history and traditions. Founder of the Australian War Memorial, Charles Bean said:

Here is their spirit, in the heart of the land they loved; and here we guard the record which they themselves made.

I would also like to congratulate Brendan Nelson, Director of the Australian War Memorial, and his team for the amazing job they do week in and week out.

As the House of Representatives member on the National Archives Advisory Council I also wish to acknowledge the outstanding work they do. They too put together an extraordinary collection for Anzac Day, called 'Discovering Anzacs', which allows people to search for stories of those who served. It is no easy feat to collect, catalogue, archive and digitise these pieces of history, and the National Archives are to be congratulated for the high quality and quantity of this collection.

I also take this opportunity to mention the State Library of Queensland, who had impressive collections to mark this important event. When searching for photographs to profile on my social media pages, I was delighted to find a number of local images of our community at the time of the First World War in their collection I was particularly delighted when I found photographs of soldiers practising military drills at the Gallipoli Barracks, which is based in my electorate. The same expressions were on the faces of the young men in the photographs as those I saw when I attended the farewell for the troops heading to Iraq recently. It makes it all the more possible to imagine how the ANZAC troops were feeling.

This brings me to speak about the social media campaign that helps bring to life the people who lived during the First World War—ANZAC Live. It tells the stories of nine real people who were all involved in different aspects of the war. The authors of ANZAC Live used the diaries of these characters to create the social media profiles of a nurse, a factory worker, an explorer, an engineer, a country boy, an artist, a carpenter, a sailor and a groom. These characters are engaging with us on Facebook and Twitter, answering questions of what they are going through and how they are feeling—all in their own words as a result of these diaries. It is a remarkable way to show our nation's history and the creators, Newscorp, are to be commended for finding a way to engage with people, particularly the younger generation, in such a modern way that allows them to understand the thoughts and feelings of our ancestors

I particularly thank Senator Ronaldson, the Minister for Veteran's Affairs, and his office team for the time and effort that went into ensuring the commemorations were perfectly planned—supported, of course, by many officers in the department. I would also like to say a special thank you to his advisor, Robert Hardie, who dedicated so much time to the Centenary of Anzac project.

On a local level there are hundreds and hundreds of people who have participated in some way to make these centenary commemorations special. Firstly, I would like to thank my local Ryan Centenary of Anzac committee, who assisted with the incredibly difficult job of deciding which few of the many talented groups should receive the Centenary of Anzac grants. This committee comprised Stewart Cameron from the Kenmore-Moggill RSL Sub-Branch; Merv Brown from Gaythorne RSL; Trevor Dixon from the National Memorial Walk and now President of .Kenmore-Moggill RSL; Ron McElwaine from the Sherwood-Indooroopilly RSL; Jeff Hilder from The Gap Pioneer and History Group; John Pepper from the Gap RSL Sub-Branch; and Chris Austin and Kevin Alcock from the 9th Battalions Association.

The Centenary of Anzac Local Grants projects have been incredibly significant for our community in our local commemorations. These projects included a book to document and honour the 97 former Brisbane Boy's College students who lost their lives during the 1st and 2nd World Wars and Afghanistan; an upgrade to Kenmore South State School's Anzac Memorial; a Walk of Remembrance at Ferny Grove State High School; a memorial Garden at Ferny Grove State School; a memorial seat and garden at Toowong State School; an upgrade to the Contemplation Building and the installation of an eternal flame at the Gallipoli Barracks Memorial Walk; the Mates for Mates WW1 Queenslander Challenge Walk; and a book examining the lives of 86 local soldiers who were killed in World War One, produced by the Sherwood-Indooroopilly RSL Sub-Branch.

While I have just quickly listed these projects—and I am sure many other members have similar ones in their own electorates—each one of these is so special and so detailed. I look at the one for Toowong State School, which was a memorial seat designed by a local artist. In the metal of the seat are all the floral emblems from Australia and, on top of that, there are little holes where people can put poppies, which not only spell out the date of the Centenary of Anzac but also have space for a little poppy for each of the people from the Toowong district who gave their lives during the war. So much thought has gone into that. They have planted poppies that are going to flower in time for Remembrance Day and, of course, rosemary in the garden. Each of these individual projects is just so detailed and thoughtful.

Like so many families, I also have connections with the Gallipoli campaign and the Anzac commemoration. My father's cousin, after whom he was named, fought at Gallipoli and survived, only to lose his life later at the Battle of Romani. My great-grandfather, Sir George Pearce, the then Minister for Defence, actually decreed Anzac Day when he was Acting Prime Minister, although, if you read a recent book about him titled *ANZAC and Empire*, initially he was not very enthusiastic. I quote:

The following year, as the first anniversary of the landing approached, Pearce, now acting Prime Minister, did not regard the events of 25 April as worthy of memorialisation. For Pearce, Gallipoli was a military defeat, and he anticipated ... that, as the war progressed, it would be replaced by an AIF victory, which would eventually provide Australia with a suitable national day. On 15 April 1916 he told Fisher that while 'informal celebrations are going to mark the anniversary of the landing at Gallipoli, and the day has been named "Anzac Day"', the Federal Government was not going to hold any ceremonies, in the belief that 'after the war is over it will then be more opportune than now to consider which event of the Australian Army is the more worthy of remembering'. But as 25 April approached, Pearce realised that 'Anzac Day' would be a significant day of communal mourning and remembrance of the war dead, although not a national day of the type he wished to establish, and into which Anzac Day subsequently has evolved. He recognised that the government would need to follow the public mood. It was too late to organise a Federal Government ceremony, but on 25 April Pearce took part in a tree-planting ceremony on the King's Domain in Melbourne. He released a statement that the Australian army would always have 'that inspiring example of Anzac'. On 16 May Pearce's Cabinet approved regulations to prevent use of the word 'Anzac' for commercial purposes.

That last point is very interesting. It is probably the reason that adjacent to the Indooroopilly Uniting Church in my electorate of Ryan is what I understand is the only Anzac memorial church in Australia. At a recent seminar conducted by local historian Jim Gibson, he noted that immediately after this Anzac memorial church was erected, legislation followed, meaning no other buildings could be named 'Anzac'. At the time, locals were concerned the building would be classified as illegal but the Governor-General allowed it to stay. I am sure there are many other interesting stories just like this all over Australia which have been brought to our attention through the Centenary of Anzac commemorations.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank all of the dedicated volunteers throughout the community who have been involved in these commemorations, from the teachers, parents and children who prepared school

services in their spare time to the RSLs who spent countless hours to make sure the community services went off without a hitch. On all levels, national, state and local, we as Australians have come together to make the centenary special. All of these individuals and groups have done a brilliant job, bringing to life the stories and the people who were everyday Australians 100 years ago. We are who we are because of our Anzacs and, after 100 years, it is just as important as ever to make sure we are preserving these memories. Thank you to those who make sure their stories are never forgotten.

We must always remember that Anzac commemorations are not about celebrating and glorifying war but rather highlight the tragic consequences of conflict. Lest we forget.