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PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Federation Chamber

ADJOURNMENT

Rackett, Mr David

SPEECH

Thursday, 13 September 2012

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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Speaker Broadbent, Russell, MP	Question No.

Mr BROADBENT (McMillan) (10:22): I note before my remarks that I am following the condolence motion for Lance Corporal Mervyn John McDonald and Private Nathanael John Aubrey Galagher. I would like to identify with the remarks made in that condolence motion.

It's all about looking after your mates. Some are not travelling so well, so we're there for each other. The main thing is they are not alone.

These are Dave Rackett's words. Dave is a constituent and a friend and has been awarded the Meritorious Service Medal by the RSL. When Dave Rackett returned from World War II, his father encouraged him to continue his service to others by joining the Returned and Services League. Sixty years later, he has now been awarded another service medal that he will wear with pride. Dave Rackett was presented with the Meritorious Service Medal at the RSL's annual state conference on Wednesday, 4 July. The Meritorious Service Medal is an honour over and above life membership. It is awarded to those already holding life membership who have had 30 years continuous membership and who have given 25 years outstanding service.

When Mr Dave Rackett moved to Warragul from Darwin more than 30 years ago, one of his first priorities was to be active in the Warragul RSL branch. Many in the community would know Mr Rackett for his commitment to RSL appeals. He is regularly seen in the lead-up to Anzac Day and Remembrance Day selling badges and poppies. For Mr Rackett, it is all part of the ongoing service he committed to as a 20-year-old in World War II.

Mr Rackett served with the Royal Australian Air Force in the south-west Pacific between 1944 and 1946. When he returned home at just 22 years of age, his father immediately took him to the local RSL. His father was also a returned serviceman. Dave says in his own words

I thought, what is all this about. But my father (a returned serviceman from both World War I and World War II) told me it was a way to continue my service to others.

In the early days, following the war, Mr Rackett joined other returned servicemen to visit veterans in hospitals and institutions. He said there were many sad cases, many men who had returned from battle still shellshocked and struggling to get back to life. 'Little has changed', says Dave. He becomes emotional now, speaking of other young men he has come into contact with as a welfare officer—a 22-year-old, just like he was, who recently returned from Afghanistan. 'It is tough', he says, shedding a tear, 'It never gets any easier and the wars keep going. It will never end; mankind can be so bitter to others.'

Dave Rackett has held many positions within the RSL. For 16 years he has been secretary of the Warragul Branch and is also a past treasurer. But it is service he is happy to continue. There is a lovely photo in the local paper of Dave holding his framed certificate, and up on the honour board behind him, in the corner of the photo, is Dave Rackett's name in the secretary's position. I think that is a lovely catch in the photo—it was great that the local paper's photographer got that. Dave says:

We have a dedicated team of hospital visitors to people at home who can't get out. That is the beauty of having a local RSL. It has been a rewarding part of my life. It's a real privilege to go into people's homes, talk to them and see what we can do to make their lives easier. But if it wasn't for the support of the community through Anzac and poppy appeals, we wouldn't have the money to do that.

Mr Rackett said he had never provided his service to RSL to be recognised. But he admits, 'when recognition does come along, it is very sweet'.

Dave is a special personality, and I want to pay tribute—from Maranoa to McMillan, which is from the bottom to the top, there are people like Dave Rackett serving our returned services community. I want to praise every

one of them today for the work they do on behalf of our returned servicemen. Here's to you, Dave Rackett, and congratulations on a well-deserved citation.

Honourable members: Hear, hear!