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PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Federation Chamber

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

Australian Defence Force Cadets

SPEECH

Monday, 27 October 2014

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Questioner
Speaker Champion, Nick, MP

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Mr CHAMPION (Wakefield) (12:28): It is nice to have a bit of bipartisanism, and I certainly congratulate the member for Herbert on bringing this motion to the chamber for our discussion. In particular, I have some memories of being an air cadet back in my youth at the air cadets based in Willaston, just near Gawler in my electorate. I went down there when I was in high school in Kapunda, my home town. I think it was on Wednesday nights that we used to meet. I have very fond memories of doing that. I think we did a couple of Anzac Day parades and helped out there as well. It was a very good experience. It certainly gave you a window into the life of what it might be like to pursue a career in the ADF, although, sadly, I did not do that; I went off in a different direction.

Mr Jones's motion to the House, in paragraph (b), talks about the assistance to local communities. I am certainly aware of that in a more recent example of the cadets, because I was recently at the 150th Clare Show. I was obviously there for the official lunch with President David Bond. The Clare Show managed to get the Governor-General, his Excellency Sir Peter Cosgrove, and Lady Cosgrove to open the 150th show. It was a great occasion. Obviously there is a lot of history in that show, and to have the Governor-General there was just terrific.

As the Governor-General moved around show, he was certainly very generous of his time with everybody. But one of the things that stuck in my mind of that particular day was when he talked to the local army cadets. You could see that they took a lot away from it as well. They were there both to participate in the opening of the show and also to have a stand—and I have no doubt they were doing a bit of recruitment while they were there. Obviously it is just great for everybody to see local cadets and the Governor-General at their local show. So I have seen firsthand the good work they do.

I am fortunate enough to have quite a good presence of cadets in my electorate. As I said before, I was part of 608 Squadron at Willaston. There is also the No. 613 Squadron and the No. 6 Wing headquarters at Edinburgh, the 411 Army cadet unit at Clare and the 49 ACU at Smithfield and, in terms of Navy cadets, we have the AMC training ship *Stuart*. I do have good cadet presence and I am certainly aware of the work that they do not just at shows and Anzac Days but also at all the local citizenship ceremonies. They do tend to assist in those events as well.

As the member for Herbert said, you do not always normally go on to serve in the defence forces, but cadetship does give young people a window into what life might be like if you pursue what is a very difficult vocation—and it is a vocation. Serving in our defence forces is not just a day job; it really does take up all of you, all of your professional life, and often it has an impact on your family as well. It is a very challenging career to pursue. Being involved in the cadets gives you a window into that and allows you to get some idea of whether or not you would like to pursue that as a vocation.

But, even if you do not go into the ADF, your time in cadets does serve you well. It gives you an opportunity to participate in the community. It gives you a chance to attend an Anzac Day ceremony in uniform. It teaches you a lot about marching and drill. All of those things are useful later on in life. I guess I can attest to that. I would certainly like to extend to the member for Herbert and the member for Banks some congratulations for bringing this motion to the House. It allows us to thank all of those involved—not just the young people who are cadets themselves and the parents who have to take them down to do the parades and the weekly drills, but also all those involved in the actual operation behind the cadets and the structures that keep that going. It is tremendously important for us to thank all of those individuals, all of those families and all of the cadets themselves. I commend the motion to the House.