House of Representatives
Proof
Federation Chamber
Statements by Members
Hopgood, Mr Jack
Speech
Thursday, 13 February 2020

By Authority of the House of Representatives
Mr PASIN (Barker) (10:21): I rise today to recognise Mount Gambier resident Jack Hopgood, who recently celebrated his 100th birthday. Jack is a softly spoken, humble man who is not overly comfortable with attention. I expect I'll be dutifully reprimanded for updating the House as to his story, but it needs to be heard in this place.

Mr Hopgood celebrated his milestone birthday on 22 January with family and friends at Mount Gambier's RSL—an organisation he's been actively involved with since returning from World War II in 1945. Not only is Mr Hopgood one of Mount Gambier's most prominent World War II veteran; he's also a surviving prisoner of war. Mr Hopgood was enlisted in the RAAF at the age of 19 and on 1 April 1940 was deployed overseas, aged 20, leaving behind his job and his father's garage. He served in Sumatra and was captured by the Japanese in Java. He was taken to Singapore as a prisoner of war in 1942. He was held by the Japanese for more than three years. Upon returning to Japan in 2017 at the invitation of the Japanese government, Jack remarked: 'I don't hold any resentment. Hate is a useless emotion.' Perhaps some of us in this place should take note of Jack's views—a true expression of forgiveness. Upon returning home from war in 1945, Jack returned to his father's garage, eventually taking over the business upon his father's death.

Jack is a valued member of the Mount Gambier community. Jack was involved with the Mount Gambier Aero Club and the Mount Gambier Veteran and Vintage Car Club, and was a founding member of the Mount Gambier Chamber of Commerce. Jack is an avid golfer and was instrumental in the establishment of the Blue Lake Golf Club, of which he is a former chairman and life member. He was also largely responsible for the beautification of the lakes area in Mount Gambier, achieving a lot in his five decades of service to that committee. Anyone who's been to the Blue Lake at Mount Gambier would be shocked to see what the area looked like before the committee's improvements. The once bare landscape now has areas of parks and gardens. It's a huge attraction for tourists and local residents alike.

Mr Hopgood was awarded an Order of Australia in 2018 for his decades of dedicated service to the Mount Gambier community. Upon receiving this award, the modest Mr Hopgood remarked, 'When you live this long, you hope you've achieved something, otherwise you probably spent a lot of time in bed!' Mr Hopgood, our community and our nation are in debt for your service. Thank you.