

FINCH HATTEN RSL SUB-BRANCH

SPEECH AT OPENING AND DEDICATION OF PINNACLE MEMORIAL

SATURDAY 14 APRIL 2018

Veterans, ex-servicemen and women, RSL members, ladies and gentlemen, and boys and girls, it is a great honour and privilege to be here with you today.

I would like to thank the Finch Hatton Sub-Branch President, Tammy Sprott, and Sub-Branch members for inviting me to the dedication of this new memorial here at the Pinnacle.

I acknowledge Presidents and members of other RSL sub-branches and RSL Auxiliaries here today from the Mackay, Pioneer Valley, and other parts of the PFH District.

I would also like to acknowledge the following people who are here with us:

1. The Mayor of the Mackay Regional Council, Greg Williamson.
2. Councillor Ross Walker from the Mackay Regional Council.
3. The Deputy President of the RSL Pioneer Fitzroy Highlands District, John Edwards.
4. The Vice President of the RSL Pioneer Fitzroy Highlands District, Phil Luzzi.
5. The Secretary of the RSL Pioneer Fitzroy Highlands, Lynette Ney.

As some of you will already know, the RSL today is an iconic organisation within our nation's social structure and is very much a part of Australia's history and DNA. The RSL story is also a part of the ANZAC legend as it was the original ANZACS returning from World War 1 who established the RSL in 1916.

Two years ago, in June 2016, the RSL celebrated the Centenary of its existence. As most of you will be aware, the RSL is a charity and there would not be too many charities in Australia who have existed and served its membership for over a 100 years and it is something all members of the RSL can be very proud of.

The aims of the League in 1916 were very simple:

- to preserve the spirit of mateship formed amidst the carnage and horror of battle.
- to honour the memory of the fallen.
- to help each other.

and these objectives have changed little since then.

The RSL was the first national welfare agency in Australia and today in it's constitution, it lists 8 objectives, and continues to provide welfare services to its members as its prime function.

However, an equally important objective is and I quote:

“to preserve the memory and records of those who have suffered and died for Australia, erect monuments to their valour, provide them with suitable burial places, and establish and preserve, in their honour, the annual commemoration days known as ANZAC Day, Remembrance Day and other commemorative days;” unquote.

If I was to construct a short mission statement for the RSL that captures what we are all about, it would include the following important words:

- mates helping mates
- and ensuring the names of the fallen liveth for evermore.

The dedication of this memorial here at the Pinnacle this morning is the Finch Hatton Sub-Branch keeping faith with this commemorative objective of the RSL and I would like to congratulate President, Tammy, and her members for doing so.

As a person who has been involved in a major commemorative project, the Centenary of ANZAC Memorial in Emu Park, I know that the construction of this new memorial by the Finch Hatton Sub-Branch has not just happened by chance. Such a project entails leadership, planning, community networking, financing, co-ordinating, organising, and lots of hard work.

Further, as a person who has been a President of an RSL Sub-Branch, I also know that the leadership is normally provided by the President and the bulk of the work is undertaken by a Sub-Branch member who drives the project with other members of the Sub-Branch and the community helping on.

In this case, the leadership was given by ex-president Tony Dodd and recently by new president Tammy Spratt and I would like to thank them both.

I know it is dangerous to single out people when so many people have contributed to a project. However, I am going to break that rule. It is my understanding that it was that dynamo, Sub-Branch Vice President, David Oliver, who initiated the project and in conjunction with the Council drove the project. Amongst his RSL colleagues, Dave is an RSL legend in the Pioneer Valley and this is not the first time that he has done such things. Dave has been awarded life membership of the RSL for such achievements and I can assure you that meeting the criteria for this prestigious award is quite arduous. Dave, we owe you a big thank you and I also thank you for your continued contribution to the League.

I would like to give a special mention and thanks to the Mackay Regional Council represented here today by the Mayor, Greg Williamson, which contributed around \$15,000 in direct funding and payments in kind towards the project. The Council also took responsibility for the construction of the memorial. Greg, can I asked you to convey the RSL's sincere thanks to the Council staff who have been involved with the construction of the memorial, especially your Council Parks, Buildings, Services Co-ordinator, Ross Willis, who could not be with us today.

I would also like to thank those organisations and the people from the Pinnacle and surrounding community who have assisted with this project, in particular, the Zach Mach Challenge entrants who contributed \$500 in funding. You may think that your contribution was small and not worthy of mention. However, I would beg to differ. Support and small contributions by members of the community can have the synergistic effect of snow balling into much larger and important contributions that in the end are responsible for getting community project like this over the line.

The price of our freedom in this country today is underwritten by the sacrifices of over three hundred and thirty-three thousand war casualties and in particular over one hundred and two thousand men and women who were killed in action or died of their wounds or disease. It is on ANZAC Day each year that we remember all fallen servicemen and women who gave their lives for our country in times of war and all those servicemen and women who returned and have since passed on.

The Pinnacle community will have this magnificent new memorial in time for their ANZAC Day commemorative service in a few weeks. I understand that in the past, ANZAC Day commemoration services and other services have been carried out at the Pinnacle and the local people organising these events have had to improvise regarding wreath laying etc. This new memorial will now be a focal point for future ANZAC and Remembrance Day services. For the local Pinnacle community, it will also be a place of reflection where people can go to remember a loved one, a relative, or a friend who was lost or suffered serious injuries in time of war.

In ending, I would like to say that I am enjoying my short stay in the Pinnacle today and I look forward to meeting with the local people after the dedication service.

Thank you.