

REMEMBRANCE DAY

Statement

HON COLIN de GRUSSA (Agricultural — Deputy Leader of the Opposition) [5.22 pm]: I rise today in my capacity as the shadow Minister for Veterans Issues to thank all members of Parliament and Western Australians for observing Remembrance Day earlier today. Originally called Armistice Day, Remembrance Day provides an occasion for all to commemorate all who have sadly passed away due to war. Remembrance Day was officially proclaimed in 1997 by the then Governor-General Sir William Deane.

At 11.00 am on 11 November 1918, the guns on the Western Front fell silent after more than four years of continuous warfare. The allied armies had driven the German invaders back, having inflicted heavy defeats upon them over the preceding four months. In November, the Germans called for an armistice—the suspension of fighting—in order to secure a peace settlement. They accepted the Allies’ terms that more or less amounted to an unconditional surrender.

It is of note that today is not the first time that Remembrance Day has fallen on a sitting day of Parliament. In fact, I would like to table some correspondence going way back to 2009 from Hon Alannah MacTiernan to Hon Colin Holt, a former member of this place, on this exact matter of Remembrance Day falling on a sitting day. The letter is dated 25 November 2009. I seek leave to table the letter and the response from the Returned and Services League of Australia.

[Leave granted. See paper [871](#).]

Hon COLIN de GRUSSA: The minister, at the time a member, wrote in that letter —

I believe that it is important for the Members of the Parliament to have the opportunity to attend this important event —

That is, Remembrance Day —

in our national calendar, an event which honours the sacrifices of our service men and women. I know that the presence of Members of Parliament does add value to the event for the local community.

I wholeheartedly agree. A letter that I have also tabled from the RSL president at the time, Mr Bill Gaynor, gives support to this motion that Parliament is scheduled in such a way to maximise the opportunities for members of Parliament to attend in their electorates on that day. I am absolutely certain that every member of this place would agree with those points raised. It was disappointing that, unfortunately, today was a sitting day that coincided with Remembrance Day and members of this house did not have the opportunity, unless they sought a pair or were away on urgent parliamentary business, to attend their Remembrance Day services, while those in the other place did. Next year, Remembrance Day will be on a Friday prior to a sitting week; however, there will be a time again when Remembrance Day falls on a sitting day. I hope all those opposite and on this side would agree that perhaps we seek to adjust our sitting calendar on those occasions so that we can attend these very important Remembrance Day services.

On a similar note, I would encourage the minister to get in behind the Nationals WA’s long-running campaign to ensure that the National Anzac Centre on Mt Clarence in Albany is free for all to access. The minister recently rented a few square metres of space in the member for Albany’s office, so I am sure that she has visited this world-class venue on much more than one occasion. The best part about this campaign is that there would be no to minimal cost to the state government.

Hon Alannah MacTiernan interjected.

The PRESIDENT: Order!

Hon COLIN de GRUSSA: We know how much the state government loves that. Under the proposal, the National Anzac Centre would be incorporated into the Australian War Memorial as an annex and entry would be free. For more than 30 000 service men and women, Albany was their last sighting of Australia before heading overseas for conflicts in November 1914. The centre is positioned on Mt Clarence and provides sweeping views of King George Sound where those service men and women departed. It is chilling in its beauty and instils a sense of respect that is on par with the War Memorial in Canberra. The National Anzac Centre is well deserving of being made more accessible for all visitors. The centre was opened on 1 November 2014 by the Prime Ministers of Australia and New Zealand. It contains multimedia, interactive technology and historical artefacts that create a deeply personal connection with the past, as well as pay tribute to those who served. It is currently operated by the City of Albany in conjunction with the heritage-listed surrounds such as Princess Royal Fortress and the Mt Clarence precinct.

It is important on Remembrance Day to never forget what occurred due to war, especially the stories of groups that are still coming to light and are relatively new compared with the continuing narrative: those stories of service men and women who were underage, of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander heritage, health staff and everyday Australians who gave it their all and were not always acknowledged as fairly as they should have been. Remembrance Day is part of our national fabric and spirit. Again, I thank all members and Western Australians for observing Remembrance Day earlier today.

Lest we forget.

Statement

HON ALANNAH MacTIERNAN (South West — Minister for Regional Development) [5.28 pm]: I agree that every member should have an opportunity to attend the Armistice Day commemorations. Certainly, I would be prepared to join forces with members right across this chamber to ensure that on future occasions we have the same opportunity that members of the Legislative Assembly had today.

Can I just say that I really, really deeply regret that Hon Colin de Grussa, in marking a very serious occasion, has apparently taken offence at the fact that the member for Albany and I have joined forces and have developed a combined office in Albany. I appreciate the great difficulty that members opposite have because there is very little opportunity to do that. Firstly, they are not known for their collaboration with their fellow members, and, secondly, they are fairly sparsely populated. I absolutely feel that the member has demeaned his contribution. It certainly should not be the focus of the discussion that we are having here today. I am very proud of the fact that the member for Albany and I have been able to join forces and put together a very strong, central hub in the middle of Albany. Together we will continue to work with groups such as the RSL. Just last weekend, I was in Albany to attend the very moving nurses memorial service held in the Nurses Memorial Garden. I really urge the member to think about his position as a leader of a party and to not trivialise these important matters with those gratuitous and completely stupid and misguided references.