

REMEMBRANCE DAY — KOREAN WAR VETERANS

**885. Mr P. ABETZ to the Minister for Veterans:**

Tomorrow is the ninety-eighth anniversary of the Armistice, which ended the Great War. Remembrance Day is when we honour the Australian service men and women who died in all conflicts, including the Korean War. Can the minister please update the house on how the Liberal–National government will be honouring the Western Australians who died in the Korean War?

**Mr J.M. FRANCIS replied:**

I thank the member for his interest in this. In fact, I thank all members who I know will stop tomorrow at 11 o'clock on the eleventh day of the eleventh month to remember not just those who lost their lives in the Great War but also the 102 000 Australians who have lost their lives in all conflicts since Federation.

This year also marks the sixty-fifth anniversary of the Battles of Kapyong and Maryang San. To honour the 34 Western Australians who were killed in action or who died of their wounds during the Korean War, tomorrow I will be releasing on the veterans minister's website a biography of each of those 34 Western Australians. The Korean War saw more than 17 000 Australian volunteers serve as part of the United Nations force. In response to North Korea's invasion of the south, the newly established United Nations Security Council faced its first significant test. The Korean War also marks the last time that all three Australian services were engaged in what is defined as a conventional war. Many who fought in Korea were experienced hands. Many Western Australians who served in Korea had also fought in World War II. In fact, two Western Australians who went on to fight in Korea had been prisoners of war during the Second World War. The biographies that I am publishing tomorrow contain remarkable stories of courage and self-sacrifice in circumstances of great peril. One of them is of Corporal Kevin Cooper, who was later mentioned in dispatches for his bravery and leadership while defending a position known as the "Hook". Another tells of the Battle of Broken Bridge, where two Western Australians died on the same day taking that position. Sadly, the final resting place of 43 Australians remains unknown, including that of six Western Australians. No doubt they are still behind North Korean lines, so their remains obviously remain beyond our reach. We can only imagine the anguish this still causes their surviving families and friends.

Korea has left a mixed legacy for many veterans who returned home. Some feel that their contribution has been forgotten by history and ignored by the wider public. It is important that during the official period of Anzac centenary commemorations, our commitment to Korea receives the attention it deserves. It was an unheralded chapter in our history, not just as a state but also as a country. It is a war that needs to be better understood. I encourage everyone to spend a few minutes looking through the biographies that will be published on the veterans minister's website tomorrow.