

ANZAC HOUSE

865. Ms E. EVANGEL to the Minister for Veterans:

Before I ask my question, I would like to acknowledge in the Speaker's gallery the students and teacher from Dudley Park Primary School from the member for Dawesville's electorate.

I understand that the minister and the Premier made a significant announcement this morning regarding the future of Anzac House. Can the minister please advise the house of how this announcement will benefit veterans?

Mr J.M. FRANCIS replied:

I thank the member for her interest in this topic. This has been a significant day for the veteran's community in Western Australia, particularly the Returned and Services League of Australia WA Branch Inc, formed in 1916 during the Great War, celebrating and commemorating its centenary this year. The RSL is the pre-eminent organisation not only in Western Australia but also throughout our country. It does wonderful work representing, working for and advocating and assisting veterans from all conflicts, all age groups and all walks of life. For many years, since the 1930s, Anzac House on St Georges Terrace has been the spiritual home of the RSL in Western Australia. It is a great day. The Premier; me; Peter Aspinall, the current state president of the RSL WA, an Albany man—I should acknowledge also, Hon Graham Edwards, the immediate past president of the RSL in WA for his advocating for this building to be gifted back—this morning signed a heads of agreement to give back that property to the RSL on behalf of the people of Western Australia so they can develop it into a seven-storey building that will better serve the contemporary needs of modern veterans. To put it into perspective, since 1999—in the last 27 years—some 76 000 Australians have been deployed in both warlike and non-warlike service overseas. In the Western Australian context, that is around 7 000 to 10 000 Western Australians of my generation, the younger generation, who have served their country overseas. Although the public perception is that veterans are ageing and dying out, the reality is that a new generation of a much larger cohort of younger veterans are coming through the ranks. In fact, more Australians have served overseas since 1999 than served in the entire Korean and Vietnam conflicts combined. I am sure the RSL will seize this opportunity to make the most of this great asset they will now have to better serve veteran's needs for at least the next 100 years. I congratulate the RSL for the work it does and wish it all the best in the future.