

## Agreement in Principle

**Mr JOHN AQUILINA** (Riverstone—Parliamentary Secretary) [10.02 a.m.]: I move:

That this bill be now agreed to in principle.

More than 10 years before the Anzac Memorial Building in Hyde Park was completed in November 1934, a legislative base was established for its operation in the form of the Anzac Memorial (Building) Act of 1923. The Act was designed to unify under the care of a trust a number of fundraising efforts that had first emerged during World War I, each with differing memorial proposals. The trust initially comprised the Premier, the Leader of the Opposition and the Lord Mayor, along with three ex-service organisations, including the forerunner of the RSL. The Commonwealth Bank and the Public Trustee also served on the trust as keepers of the funds. This trust successfully oversaw the worldwide design competition and continued fundraising that eventually led to the building of a most remarkable memorial, one that is rich in symbolism and yet simple in its dignity.

The architectural achievement alone is testimony to the legacy that the building's depression era workers, many of whom were returned servicemen themselves, have bequeathed to succeeding generations. The aesthetic merit only serves to enhance the purpose for which it was built—this solemn memorial stands in silent testimony to wartime sacrifice. The Anzac Memorial Building was the culmination of post-World War I efforts to erect memorials in every Australian town and suburb. These war memorials, of which there are believed to be more than 3,000 throughout New South Wales, were built to provide places of reflection on the sacrifices of the past and comfort for the families of the fallen.

The establishment of the Veterans Affairs portfolio in 2009 has enabled the New South Wales Government to give particular focus to preserving and restoring these memorials. All memorials serve to remind present and future generations of the sacrifices endured during wartime and the responsibility we have to honour those who served—they are precious tributes to the courage and mateship that are synonymous with our Anzac legend. The Anzac Memorial in Hyde Park is the pre-eminent expression of the outpouring of mourning after the Great War. With the passage of time, recognition has also been made of the immense sacrifices of the World War II generation and in the subsequent wars and conflicts that have plagued the latter half of the twentieth century. It now stands as a haven to the memory of those who have served in all wars.

The Anzac Memorial is indeed a substantial memorial befitting the heart of this nation's largest city. With the passage of time, many of our veterans are also ageing, especially those who fought during World War II and in Korea and Vietnam. Consequently, it is tremendously important that the wider community take greater responsibility for honouring our commitment to never forget their sacrifices. The New South Wales Government in recent years has contributed significantly to the preservation and enhancement of the State's principal war memorial. The Government's \$6 million capital upgrade for the memorial was recently completed and the building reopened on the occasion of its seventy-fifth anniversary on 24 November 2009. This represented the first substantial renovation of the building since it was completed in 1934.

I am pleased to inform members that the professionalism with which this work was undertaken has been recognised, with the trustees and the Government Architect's Office winning one of the top National Trust Heritage Awards last month. The Government has also increased the memorial's budget support by \$750,000 per annum, commencing in 2009-10, to bring the memorial's recurrent budget to a total of \$1.25 million. This increase provides funds for enhanced security, additional regular maintenance and a curatorial capacity for the memorial's memorabilia. The next step is to undertake important and overdue reform of the memorial's governance and management. This initiative will be achieved through the Anzac Memorial (Building) Amendment Bill 2010 now brought before the House.

The trust has remained virtually unchanged since the 1920s. However, all parties involved, including the RSL, agree that a modernised and more strategic trust supported by the professional resources of government will ensure the memorial can continue to develop into the future, particularly in its education role. These fundamental reforms are being pursued in partnership with the RSL and will retain the essential non-partisan nature of the trust. Reform will ensure that the resources of government are available to the memorial. The recent significant contributions of the Department of Premier and Cabinet and the Government Architect's Office will continue, bringing a strategic focus and essential building expertise to the trust's work.

The State Library has made available its collection management expertise and the Department of Education and Training will facilitate enhanced curriculum connections with the new Spirit of Anzac exhibition, also opened in November 2009. In recognition of these essential contributions, clause 2 of schedule makes the Director-General of the Department of Education and Training, the New South Wales Government Architect and the State Librarian trustees, in addition to the Premier, the Leader of the Opposition, the Lord Mayor of Sydney and the President of the RSL (New South Wales), who are currently trustees. The President of the TB Sailors, Soldiers and Airmen's Association of New South Wales (Inc.), which, along with the RSL, is one of the founding trustees,

will continue on the trust until the association chooses to relinquish its post, referred to as the transition date in schedule 1. The TB association is nearing the end of a proud history of care and advocacy for the needs of veterans with tuberculosis. I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the many years of service given by the association's president, Mr Stan Poulsen, not only to those suffering the effects of tuberculosis, but also to the work of the Anzac Memorial.

New section 4 provides for the appointment of a veterans' representative, nominated by the RSL president, to replace the TB association president at a transition date provided for in new section 3 (5) in schedule 1. The Chief Executive Officer of the New South Wales Trustee and Guardian will no longer be a trustee. Instead a community representative will be appointed by the Premier who has financial or business qualifications or experience that will assist the trustees. Both this person and the veterans' representative will have terms of three years, but will be eligible for reappointment.

New section 2 (1A) specifies the Premier as chairperson of the trustees, with new section 3 enabling the Premier to authorise a proxy to also exercise the functions of chairperson. The Premier's proxy will ordinarily be the Minister holding the portfolio of Minister Assisting the Premier on Veterans Affairs. In the absence of the Minister Assisting, the RSL president, appointed as deputy chairperson by new section 2 (1B), will exercise the functions of chairperson. New section 5 in schedule will add to the powers of the trustees, a role promoting an understanding of Australia's military history and heritage, as well as conducting community education, a critical role that the memorial will be expected to play in coming years. New section 6 provides for the trustees to delegate their functions to any trustee or to the Department of Premier and Cabinet. The new Office for Veterans Affairs in the Department of Premier and Cabinet will provide secretariat services to the trustees.

Minor amendments will also be made to the Anzac Memorial (Building) By-laws 1937. Schedule 2 of the bill seeks to modernise terminology and to update the quorum requirement to reflect the increased size of the trust. A further amendment to the Returned and Services League of Australia (New South Wales Branch) Incorporation Act 1935 included in schedule 3 of the bill, appoints the RSL as Memorial Guardian, a role similar to that which applies to the Cenotaph in Martin Place. This appointment gives special honour to the RSL and its members, as well as a gatekeeper role in preserving the memorial's appropriate use. In these ways, the New South Wales Government will ensure that the Anzac Memorial Building remains at the heart of the whole community, fulfilling its commitment to remember. In the words of Laurence Binyon's *Ode to the Fallen*:

as we that are left grow old:  
We will remember them.

We must ensure that the Anzac Memorial Building continues to inspire reflection on Australia's military past in our generation and for generations to come. The New South Wales Government remains committed to maintaining and equipping this vital work of remembrance. I commend the bill to the House