

How meeting a bloke named Dave led me to change housing eligibility for veterans

Posted by Alexis Merheb on April 21, 2016 ·

This is the transcript of a statement I gave to Parliament on the 21st of April 2016

Mr Speaker, as the Premier indicated this morning,

on Monday morning in community parks, at memorials and on battlefields that stretch from the Coral Sea to Anzac Cove and onto the western front - Australians and New Zealanders will stop and contemplate the horror of war and the brave men and women who have fought on our behalf in them.

They will pause and contemplate the phrase "at the going down of the sun, and in the morning, we will remember them - lest we forget"

Unfortunately Mr Speaker too often we do forget.

When I think about those words "at the going down of the sun and in the morning" Mr Speaker I think of Dave George.

I met Dave at his home in New Farm.

I was visiting some of the impressive homes built by the Brisbane Housing Company for some of Brisbane's most vulnerable.

Good homes - safe homes— affordable homes.

Dave served in the Royal Australian Navy as a Quarter Master Gunner on HMAS Yarra and HMAS Supply.

After he left the Navy Dave struggled, as many veterans do.

At one point Dave spent 18 months sleeping rough on the streets.

Mr Speaker, I am very pleased that Dave has been able to join us in the Gallery today.

Dave had a forceful message for me when I arrived on his doorstep - he needed us to do something for homeless veterans.

He pointed out that there are a small number of recipients of Veterans' Affairs Total and Permanent Impairment Disability Pensions and Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Act

Special Payments who could be helped by a Bond Loan or Rental Grant, but currently can't due to income limits for these services.

Mr Speaker, I am pleased to inform the House that this changes as of today.

Today we announce that we are including these two payments in the eligibility criteria for Bond Loans and Rental Grants.

Mr Speaker - I want to be clear, I do not believe that this announcement that we make today is a matter of ideology—it is not.

I fundamentally believe that reforms like this are what good government is all about.

But when those opposite complain about too much consultation - too much talking, not enough doing - I hope they reflect on the value of my conversation with Dave.

When you listen to people, you hear things.

As a result, a bloke named Dave just changed Government policy and has helped improve veterans' lives.

So on Monday, as we are all remembering the fallen, I encourage you to take a moment to spare a thought for all of the vets doing it tough this ANZAC Day

People who at the going down of the sun will find a place to sleep in a park or by a river.