

BATTLE OF LONG TAN

Statement by Member for Moore

MR G. SNOOK (Moore) [12.52 pm]: Tomorrow, 18 August, marks the fortieth anniversary of the Battle of Long Tan, a day now also known as Vietnam Veterans Day. The battle took place in a rubber plantation at Long Tan, involving 108 soldiers of D Company, 6th Battalion. Many of these soldiers were conscripts barely out of their teens. It is now part of military legend that those 108 young soldiers, inexperienced in battle, faced an enemy force of 2 500 battle-hardened North Vietnamese Army and Vietcong soldiers. The battle was fought in horrendous conditions over a number of hours. Those brave young men acquitted themselves with the finest example of Aussie tenacity, discipline and heroism. Despite odds of more than 20 to one against them, they drove the enemy into retreat. Eighteen young Aussies died that day, along with more than 245 enemy troops. The soldiers of D Company endured that day something that the majority of us in this place and the majority of people in the community have never had to experience, nor could we even begin to comprehend the circumstances that they faced.

The despicable treatment dished out by some members of our community to those conscripts on their return from active duty in Vietnam is a massive shame that those people should carry. It is a blight on this country and the authorities that they have failed to recognise with citations the exceptional bravery and sacrifice of those soldiers in their service for and duty to our country. As conscripts, they were simply doing their duty, as the law of the day required of them. The federal government should immediately reverse the decision to refuse to award medals to those soldiers of D Company for their gallant bravery at the Battle of Long Tan.

We acknowledge the service of Vietnam veterans to our country, along with the unnecessary trauma that many of them have had to endure. Tomorrow, I hope that some members will tell a Vietnam vet, "Good on you, mate. Thanks."

Statement by Member for Yokine

MR R.C. KUCERA (Yokine) [12.54 pm]: I, too, note that tomorrow is the fortieth anniversary of the Battle of Long Tan. This engagement epitomised the bravery of our Australian fighting forces in a war that divided our nation. Their contribution to our nation failed to be recognised for decades after the end of the conflict, something that must never be allowed to happen again. As we commemorate the fortieth anniversary of the Battle of Long Tan, we also remember that six Australians never came home from the Vietnam War. They are still listed as missing in action. Tomorrow, 18 August 2006, at 1100 hours, for the very first time in Australia we will try to give closure to their families. Six streets in a new subdivision in Baldivis in the City of Rockingham, "The Chase", will be named in honour of Private David Fisher from the SAS; Lance-Corporal John Gillespie, 8th Field Ambulance; Privates Richard Parker and Peter Gillson, 1 RAR; and Pilot Officer Robert Carver and Flying Officer Herbert, 2nd Squadron, RAAF, Canberra Bombers. This dedication is in memory of the ultimate sacrifice they made. Their families, who were left to wonder about their fate, have travelled from all over Australia to attend this dedication. I pay tribute to the outstanding efforts of the Vietnam Veterans Association, its president, Peter Ramsay, and the members of the organising committee; the City of Rockingham; Peet and Co Ltd in particular, the developers of the subdivision; the Department for Planning and Infrastructure; and all those whose compassion and vision have made this wonderful gesture possible.

Many of us could have been in the mud and the rain at Long Tan but for the fall of a number in the lottery of life. I know that every member of this house will give thanks to those who fought so that we could be here today as part of this great democratic process. Our thoughts are with all those who made the ultimate sacrifice, and tomorrow our thoughts will be with those six families who were left to grieve. Lest we forget.