

FIRST WORLD WAR — EQUESTRIAN CONTRIBUTION

Statement by Member for Swan Hills

MR F.A. ALBAN (Swan Hills) [12.54 pm]: With Remembrance Day approaching, and in this year of the Anzac centenary, it seems appropriate to acknowledge those who are often forgotten for their contribution to and sacrificed for our country and its freedoms that we enjoy. The electorate of Swan Hills is known for its equestrian community. We have the State Equestrian Centre in Brigadoon and many communities that are very active with horses.

Reports state that some 136 000 horses, or Walers as they were known abroad, departed Australia's shores during the First World War. Only a single one returned home—Sandy. I understand that Sandy was one of 6 100 Walers that left from Albany in November 1914. He was owned by Major General Sir William Throsby Bridges, who kept a diary of his wartime experiences from early 1915. His division was the first ashore at Anzac Cove on that fateful day and he was shot the following month. Notably, he is the only Australian killed during the First World War that had their remains returned to Australia, with Duntroon being the Major General's final resting place. In 1917, after the war was over, Minister for Defence, Senator George Pearce, called for Sandy to be returned home. As per the Major General's wishes, Sandy was turned out to graze at Remount Hill, home of the Light Horse Brigade in Maribyrnong Victoria, until his death in 1923. Sandy is possibly the most well known example of the equestrian contribution to Australia's war effort, and certainly should be remembered on behalf of those 136 000 horses that did not make it home.