



House of Assembly

Thursday, 11 November 2010

GAWLER RSL CLUB

Mr PICCOLO (Light) (15:24): Most members today would have attended some Remembrance Day service in their electorates, and I would like to briefly comment on the service I attended today. It is unfortunate that on this day I also have to bring to the attention of the house an ongoing dispute between my Gawler RSL Club and the Town of Gawler.

Before I do that, I would like to pay my respects to all those who have served this country, particularly those who have made the supreme sacrifice by giving their life. It is particularly sad for me to stand here today against the backdrop of Remembrance Day and talk about a decision made by the local Gawler council that has caused a great deal of distress for the Gawler RSL. In fact, so upset is the local RSL club that it has actually printed a flyer – which I have distributed amongst the community – to put its case and also to protest the council's decision. As an indication of its hurt and disgust about this council

decision, the flyer is actually entitled, 'Gawler RSL offended'. So, that gives an indication of how upset the local RSL club is with the Town of Gawler.

Before I actually read onto the record some of the comments made in this leaflet, I would like to provide a brief outline of the dispute to date. On 5 July, the local RSL club sought my assistance and advice after a meeting they had had with the council regarding the proposal by the council to move the honour boards from their current prominent position in the civic buildings. I wrote to the council on behalf of the local RSL and was advised on 7 July as follows:

This matter...was 'floated' as an opportunity for the boards to have pride of place in the Institute and be incorporated back into the space as part of the new work.

In addition to that, the council also wrote to the president, or another officer of the Gawler RSL, on 17 July, and I quote from this email, which is very important:

No decisions have been made by council...As indicated a report is being prepared for council consideration on 27 July.

It goes onto the options. One of the options is 'to relocate the honour boards to the institute' – and this is very important – 'if the RSL agrees'. The email continues, 'I would be pleased to discuss this matter in person with you.'

The council meeting duly took place on 27 July, but no meeting between the council and the RSL

took place before that. The RSL was not afforded the opportunity to address the council, and the council went ahead and made the decision to relocate the boards. The council decided to relocate the honour boards despite giving the RSL a written assurance that it would only relocate them with the agreement of the RSL. I quote again, 'The other option is to relocate the honour boards to the Institute if the RSL agrees.' I understand why the Gawler RSL is outraged by this council decision and action. I will now quote briefly from the leaflet, because I think it says a lot:

The dismantling of Gawler's Walk of Honour and relocation to the foyer of the newly renovated Gawler Institute, where they are not readily accessible to members of the public, veterans' relatives or loved ones was done without proper consultation with the RSL Gawler sub-branch.

These honour boards and the Walk of Honour had a pride of place in major council civic buildings, but now they are proposed to be put elsewhere. On a day where we actually say, 'Lest we forget,' it is unfortunate that the Town of Gawler has, indeed, forgotten those who have served.

Time expired.