



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

**PROOF**

**Federation Chamber**

**PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS**

**Veterans**

**SPEECH**

**Monday, 15 October 2018**

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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## SPEECH

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<b>Page</b> 155	<b>Proof</b> Yes
<b>Questioner</b>	<b>Responder</b>
<b>Speaker</b> O'Brien, Ted, MP	<b>Question No.</b>

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**Mr TED O'BRIEN** (Fairfax) (18:11): 'We are grateful!. Thank you for your service. Navy, Army and Air Force.' Those are the words on a sticker that is now on the cars of thousands and thousands of residents on the Sunshine Coast in Queensland, where I reside. It was Jasmin Carmel who inspired that sticker. Jasmin is a mum who lost her boy, Jack, a veteran. I first met Jasmin at the Buderim Ginger Factory. We had a quick chat and, subsequently, we have gotten to know each other quite well.

I myself have not experienced war—not firsthand. My family, like most, have stories of forebears who have. In talking with Jasmin and learning about her son who she lost, she, in such a human, authentic way was able to express the pain and the hurt that others feel—that other families feel. She wanted to do something. She spoke openly about feeling helpless and about wanting to do something to say thank you to other people who are serving and have served. That is what led to her coming up with a very practical idea of printing stickers that just simply say, 'We're grateful!' These stickers are shown on the back of vehicles and probably elsewhere—it is on the back of my car. You do see them everywhere. Even though I'm not one of the ones to whom that sticker speaks, it touches me every time I see it on the back of a car, because it reminds me that the reason we can drive around a free country, is that people put themselves on the line—they fight and they die. We as a country owe so much to those who are prepared to sacrifice their lives and those who return—many of whom do suffer, as Jasmin would say, with PTSD. That's why we, as a government, need to continue to invest in providing mental health services, and we are—thank God, we are. That simple message of saying thank you, that hand-on-heart stuff that is really hard to wrap your arms around in a tangible way and put a value on, is so vitally important. All of us who serve politically have attended many different events of the Australian Defence Force, so we know the importance of ceremony. We know the importance that the simple words 'thank you' mean.

The motion that we discussed today talks about a military covenant. Another wonderful Sunshine Coaster, Graeme Mickelberg, a veteran and great community leader, spoke to me about the importance of having a covenant of sorts years ago. He, together with so many others, has been speaking to government and framing up what this compact is all about. I'm delighted to know that this important year, where we commemorate the 100th anniversary of the guns falling silent on the Western Front, is a time for us to be looking seriously at an Australian veterans covenant. It is why the Australian government is working so closely with the ex-service community to develop an Australian veterans covenant which will acknowledge the service and the sacrifice of the veteran community and recognise the role of all Australians in supporting veterans and their families. The government will be saying more about this in the days and months ahead. I am proud to be part of a government that's doing just that.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER ( Mr Gee ): I thank the member for Fairfax and, indeed, all members who have contributed to this debate. The time allotted for this debate has now expired. The debate is adjourned, and the resumption of the debate will be made an order of the day for the next sitting.