

25 February 2009

Constituency Statement Lindsay Electorate

National Servicemen's Association of Australia

Mr BRADBURY (Lindsay) (9:46 AM) —I rise to knowledge the outstanding work of the Penrith City Sub Branch of the National Servicemen's Association of Australia. I have the great honour of being the patron of the sub-branch. The nashos hold a special place in the history of the Australian defence forces. They are the 290,000 young men who were called up to undertake national service in the Army, the Navy and the Air Force in the period between 1951 and 1972.

Between 1951 and 1957, all 18-year-old men were called up for national service, undertaking an intensive training regime in the Citizens Military Forces. Between 1957 and 1959, the numbers of men called up were reduced, and a quota system based on birth dates was introduced. Many of the nashos called up between 1951 and 1959 enlisted in the regular forces and saw active service in Korea and Malaya. National service was suspended in 1959, but, following Australia's military commitment to the Vietnam War, it was reinstated in 1965 and continued until Australia's withdrawal from Vietnam in 1972. In this period, young men were called up under a ballot system similar to that which was introduced in 1957. Many of those nashos called up between 1965 and 1972 served in overseas theatres of war, with around 200 dying in Vietnam.

It is a stain on the fabric of our national story that many of our servicemen, including our nashos, returned home to a less than welcoming Australian public, with many people, regrettably, taking out their anger over the politics of the Vietnam War on those who risked their lives in service to their country. Whilst decisions to commit Australian troops to battle will always—and, in a strong democracy, should always—be a legitimate matter of rigorous public debate, we must never again allow differences of opinion over a decision to send Australian troops to war to prevent us from recognising the sacrifices and honouring the contributions of those who have gone to war in defence of our freedoms and our values. Thankfully, the nashos are now properly recognised for their dedication and commitment to the defence of Australia, and, in 2001, the Anniversary of National Service 1951-1972 Medal was introduced.

The Penrith City Sub Branch of the Nashos are a vibrant group, who, for the last seven years, have been a source of support and strength for their members. In particular, I would like to acknowledge the contributions of President Harry Moorfoot, Secretary John Taylor and Treasurer Tom Kelly.

Earlier this month, I attended the third anniversary of the laying of the national servicemen's memorial at Victoria Park in St Marys. I was honoured to stand with the nashos of the Penrith sub-branch that day and recognise their important contribution. The motto of the National Servicemen's Association is 'Proud to be a nasho'. I would like to say that we, as those who have benefited from their service to our country, are

proud of our nashos, and I am proud to be the patron of a wonderful group of dedicated and patriotic Australians. (Time expired)