



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

PROOF

BILLS

**Defence (Honour General Sir John
Monash) Amendment Bill 2018**

Second Reading

SPEECH

Monday, 22 October 2018

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

SPEECH

Date Monday, 22 October 2018	Source House
Page 13	Proof Yes
Questioner	Responder
Speaker McGowan, Cathy, MP	Question No.

Ms McGOWAN (Indi) (10:15): I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

In moving that this bill be read a second time, I acknowledge my colleague the member for Ryan, who will be seconding the bill and speaking to the bill.

This legislation embraces the Jerilderie proposition to posthumously promote General Sir John Monash one step in rank to field marshal. Today, I'm introducing this bill on behalf of the thousands of Australians that support the recognition and honouring of General Sir John Monash. This includes many of my colleagues in this House.

It has been a long-running campaign, launched by the Hon. Tim Fischer at the Sydney Institute in 2008. Today I acknowledge the work of the Saluting Monash Council, including its chair, Tim Fischer, Lieutenant Colonel John Moore, Michael Headbury, Dr Judy Landou and many others.

Why am I bringing this bill to the House? This bill has the support of my electorate. I would particularly like to call out the community of Flowerdale. They hosted a general meeting, to which they invited me and Tim Fischer, and asked me to bring this bill to the House. This also has national grassroots support, with over 72 veterans signing up in support. And, if ever there was a time when we as a nation need role models, it is today.

The final reason I am bringing this to the House is to acknowledge and thank Mr Tim Fischer, my constituent. It is my role as a member of parliament to represent my constituents in the House. As Tim Fischer has said, it's never too late to right a wrong. It's never too late to salute a military leader and an outstanding Australian citizen, who received no Australian government awards post 11.00 am on 11 November 1918.

The first purpose of this bill is to posthumously promote General Sir John Monash of Melbourne and Jerilderie by one step in rank to Australian field marshal. This carefully drafted bill does this but has safeguard clauses to ensure it will not open the floodgates for other promotions. The bill is in accord with the grassroots Jerilderie proposition of the Saluting Monash Council, and it has been endorsed by meetings right across Australia—from Sydney to Perth.

But is not the first posthumous promotion; there are a number of precedents. I would particularly like to note that in 1915 the Australian Army posthumously promoted Brigadier General Henry Normand MacLaurin one step in rank. He died on 27 April 1915 but in July that year was promoted from colonel to brigadier general, as the rank was known at that time.

If this bill is adopted and signed by the Governor-General in Executive Council, it would symbolically salute not only Sir John Monash but also all of our volunteer AIF in World War I. I believe it would give the people of Australia a wonderful role model to aspire to.

There are so many achievements of Sir John Monash—his war on the Western Front, the huge contribution he made to the allied victory and his enormous work after the war. But I want to spend a few minutes sharing with the House my particular passion for Sir John Monash. I was a very young four-year-old when the electricity got turned on in the Indigo Valley, an isolated farming community so far from everywhere. I was with my father and he told me how his father, my grandfather, had fought in the First World War, and how, after the war, this wonderful engineer came back and he was responsible for the State Electricity Commission of Victoria. Consequently, a number of years later, in our little isolated village we had electricity. Dad told me the story of grandpa and his fight in the First World War. He told me the story of my grandfather returning to Australia after the war, becoming a surveyor and making a huge contribution to the Australian community. Dad said to me, 'Cathy, that's your job. You've got to leave the world in a better place.' I know that Monash did that. He was an amazing engineer. Regularly, when I go down the Hume Highway to Benalla and cross the Monash Bridge—

and there's a lovely little plaque—I think of the amazing contribution engineers, scientists and technology people make to our community. That's really why I want to have this bill debated in the House and brought to a vote, because it will give all Australians an opportunity to learn about sacrifice, skill, leadership, victory, returning home, resilience and making our community a much, much better place.

Before I pass on to the seconder, I just want to say a couple of words about parliament stepping up, because surely there is some controversy in the wider community about this activity. But this is a decision for the Australian people to make and for parliament to make, and the timing is now. On 11 November 2018, just two-and-a-half weeks away, we will commemorate 100 years of the end of the war to end all wars. Surely now is the time for a national discussion about what leadership looks like, about what sacrifice looks like and about what real resilience looks like. I can think of no-one better than Monash to lead us in that discussion.

In bringing forward my bill to the House, I want to finish with a quote from Major General Arthur Denaro, former Commandant of Royal Military Academy in Sandhurst. He said:

I write with due humility and great pleasure to support the Saluting Monash Council's objective to achieve the ... promotion of General Sir John Monash to the rank of Field Marshal ...

He went on to say, 'There is no doubt that Monash is one of Australia's greatest soldiers, a commander whose performance on the battlefield far outstripped the performance of the Allies right across the world.' He was Australian. He was a multicultural Australian. He was a man of great courage. So now is the time to bring it on for debate, to recognise him and to bring the Australian community with us as we acknowledge one of our great heroes.

The SPEAKER: Is the motion seconded?