



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

**PROOF**

**Federation Chamber**

**GRIEVANCE DEBATE**

**Hehir, Mr Louie, Petition: Organ and  
Tissue Donation, Geelong and District  
Peace Memorial, Collins Persse, Mr  
Michael Dudley de Burgh, MVO, OAM**

**SPEECH**

**Tuesday, 26 June 2018**

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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## SPEECH

<p><b>Date</b> Tuesday, 26 June 2018  <b>Page</b> 121  <b>Questioner</b>  <b>Speaker</b> Marles, Richard, MP</p>	<p><b>Source</b> House  <b>Proof</b> Yes  <b>Responder</b>  <b>Question No.</b></p>
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**Mr MARLES** (Corio) (18:36): This evening I want to raise four issues in relation to my community in Geelong. It's nice to be able to do that this evening with the other representative from Geelong, the member for Corangamite, here in the chamber. I want to start by talking about a young constituent of mine called Louie Hehir. Louie is the recipient of a double kidney transplant. Louie spent his 10th birthday on a dialysis machine, having suffered double renal failure. He spent four years on that dialysis machine before he received a kidney transplant. That was, as Louie described it, a very dark time. He describes it in terms of being in a bad place. He talked about being bullied at school for being different during that time, being fussy about germs, unable to drink water, in constant pain.

To hear Louie's story—Louie is now 16—is to hear the story of an incredibly brave young man who has overcome an appalling set of odds presented to him at the start of his life. I got to know Louie as a work experience student in my office. Indeed, Louie wrote a speech for me, which I delivered in this place a few weeks ago, about the question of establishing an opt-out policy for organ donation. Tonight I'd like to present a petition that Louie has collected in respect of this. The petition that he has collected asks for the introduction of a bill on an opt-out policy in respect of organ donation. Louie collected 441 signatures in pursuit of that petition.

*The petition read as follows—*

Spent my 10th birthday hooked to a dialysis machine. I'd lost both kidneys to renal failure - doctors said I desperately needed a donor to survive. But it was 4 years before they found one. My wait was so painful, but unfortunately not uncommon. Australia's organ donation rates are disastrous, and costing lives. 9 people passed away waiting for a transplant in 2014. That's why I'm worried about a little mate of mine who's 8 and really sick. We met at kidney health camp, and I'm sort of helping him through his journey - I'm now 16. I don't want him to go through the same nightmare I did waiting for an organ. I was bullied for being "different" - fussy about germs, unable to drink water, in constant pain. And while some tried to understand, they don't know what it's like - to be hooked up to a machine as a young kid because your body failed you. It's hard- I was in a bad place. We desperately need more organ donors in Australia. Sign my petition calling on the Australian Government to prioritise organ donation in our hospitals, and improve the medical processes which will result in more transplants.

If the House would act by introducing a bill on the Opt-out Policy for Organ Donation.

from 441 citizens (Petition No. EN0591)

Petition received.

**Mr MARLES:** Labor proudly recalls the establishment of the Commonwealth Organ and Tissue Authority, which occurred under the Rudd government. Since its institution, the authority has seen a 40 per cent increase in the number of people who have put themselves down for organ donation. But it is the case that, at any point in time in our country today, there are 1,600 people in need of an organ donation. The single most important factor in meeting that need is people having the conversation about what happens if their loved ones are in a circumstance where they meet their passing but there is an opportunity, through organ donation, to save the lives of others.

In addition to campaigning for opt-out organ donation, it is really important that we encourage Australians to participate in the Australian Organ Donor Register and to have that conversation. People can do that by going to [www.donatelife.gov.au/decide](http://www.donatelife.gov.au/decide), and there they can register on the Australian Organ Donor Register. But tonight I would really like to acknowledge Louie Hehir, his bravery and his commitment to raising this issue.

The second issue I would like to raise tonight is in respect of the Geelong and District Peace Memorial in Johnstone Park, which, the member for Corangamite will attest, is very much a spiritual home for those of us who live in Geelong. It is a beautiful war memorial. It was commissioned in 1922, and the original foundation

stone was laid by Alderman Howard Hitchcock, who is a very famous Geelong name. It was opened in 1926 by the Governor of Victoria at the time, Lord Somers. The cost of the building was 15,000 pounds, which was raised by the Geelong community.

It has been brought to my attention that the Geelong peace memorial needs to be brought up to date in terms of its commemoration of conflicts since World War II. It was originally constructed as a commemoration in relation to World War I. It now has 3½ thousand names inscribed on it, which are by and large from the two world wars. Andrew Hanns—again, a person familiar to the member for Corangamite—the President of Geelong RSL and a former ADF member who was deployed in East Timor, has written to me. I would like to read his letter into the record. Andrew writes:

The Geelong RSL Sub Branch has a responsibility to the people of Geelong in conjunction with the City of Greater Geelong to carry on the customs and traditions of providing commemorative services in the heart of Geelong, being in the peace Memorial which is located in Johnstone Park. As we know the memorial was built in the early 1920's for those who served in the Great War, the memorial is designed for those veterans and their families and the people of Geelong for a time of reflection and also commemoration.

It has served well, to the point that it had another addition of those whom served in 1939-45 being WWII. The memorial was designed in a way that it overlooks Johnstone Park, the park itself is peace full and is well utilised by the community and those visiting. On Anzac Day each year veterans and their organisations much the streets of Geelong, past the Peace memorial where the general public in their thousands gather outside the memorial for the main service.

Over the past 10 years, a number of organisations have asked for the update of conflicts inside the Peace Memorial, we need to remember those whom served post 1945, Korea, Malaya Borneo, Vietnam, East Timor, Iraq, Afghanistan and Peace Keeping operations. We have one of the three fully enclosed memorials, Australian War Memorial, Shrine in Melbourne and the Geelong Peace Memorial. Geelong is the only one that does not acknowledge those conflicts that have been mentioned post 1945.

Let's update Geelong's memorial so veterans and their families of Geelong can continue customs and traditions each year on Anzac Day, Remembrance Day and other events for the public and school to attend, which educates along with reflection and commemoration for local community and those visiting the Geelong area leaving an experience.

The Peace Memorial is in the repairs to maintain this iconic memorial, that way today's veterans can carry the baton of the past veterans and continue their work in the veteran community. Geelong has the one and only Peace Memorials, this year we commemorate the centenary of Armice or the centenary of peace, thousands of veterans, veterans families and the community will attend this service. The community need to recognition of those other conflicts in the memorial to reflect, commemorate and educate the children of today and tomorrow.

Regards

Andrew Hanns

I would like to inform the House that I have written to the Minister for Veterans' Affairs, Darren Chester, to pursue the requests that Andrew has made in his letter.

The third issue I would like to raise is the very sad passing yesterday of Michael Collins Persse. Michael was 86 years old and died after a long battle with myeloid leukaemia. He was a history and English teacher and the school archivist at Geelong Grammar in my electorate. What sets Michael apart from any other teacher I have ever heard of is that his connection with that school lasted for 63 years. It is far and away the longest connection that any teacher would have had in a school in my electorate and, I daresay, in the country. His attention to the detail of the students lives at that school was prodigious. Kids attest to the fact that whilst at school on their birthday—we're talking about hundreds of kids—they would receive a card from Michael wishing them a happy birthday. Indeed, those cards kept coming years after they left school. There were literally thousands of people in Michael's memory that he was writing to all the time. That means every single day he attended to that. He was, when Prince Charles was at Geelong Grammar, his personal tutor, and it began a friendship that he maintained with Prince Charles throughout his life. Indeed, in a foreword to one of the books that Michael wrote, Prince Charles said:

As his writings show, he has become the guardian of so much wisdom and collective memory that by now he must surely qualify as a National Treasure.

Michael was made a Member of the Royal Victorian Order by the Queen. He was also awarded the Order of Australia Medal.

I should say that he was a teacher of mine. My father was the deputy principal of Geelong Grammar, and we lived at that school for a very long time. As my father said, Michael was more than just a teacher; he was a family friend. But he was a teacher of mine in my younger years. I know that I speak on behalf of so many constituents of mine and indeed people around Australia who yesterday would have been deeply saddened by the message that emanated from the school about Michael's passing, albeit that Michael lived a long and very fruitful and productive life. Unfortunately, I'll need to leave my fourth topic for another occasion. Vale, Michael Collins Perse.