



Speech by

Andrew Cripps

MEMBER FOR HINCHINBROOK

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31ST INFANTRY BATTALION

Mr CRIPPS (Hinchinbrook—NPA) (4.56 pm): I rise to speak about the 31st Infantry Battalion, proudly known as the Kennedy Regiment, raised and recruited out of the communities of north Queensland, and the dedicated members of the 31st Infantry Battalion Association that meets regularly in honour of their beloved battalion which they formerly served. I was very pleased to be a guest at a dinner on 24 May this year hosted by the Ingham Branch of the 31st Infantry Battalion Association at the RSL Club in Ingham.

The Kennedy Regiment has a long history dating back over 120 years. Many of its early members served with the Queensland Mounted Infantry during the Boer War, and they were awarded the Kings Banner in appreciation of the service of its soldiers. The 31st Infantry Battalion was one of the first infantry units mobilised in 1914 at the outbreak of World War I and was originally sent to Thursday Island for coastal defence purposes. In 1915 the unit served in France as part of the 8th Brigade in the 5th Division. The 5th Division suffered heavy losses during the battle of Fromelles. In 1917 the Kennedy Regiment took part in the advance on the Hindenburg Line at Polygon Wood near Ypres, where Private Patrick Budgen earned a posthumous Victoria Cross. In 1918 the 31st Infantry Battalion participated in the capture of Villers-Bretonneux and later Bullecourt.

At the outbreak of World War II in 1939, units of the regiment were located in Townsville, Ayr, Ingham, Bowen, Proserpine, Charters Towers and Home Hill. In 1941, when Japan entered the war, all militia units were placed on full-time duty and, in 1942, these units were deployed to defend the airstrip at Jackey Jackey on the Cape York Peninsula.

In 1943, the 31st Infantry Battalion and the 51st Infantry Battalion were amalgamated to form the 31st/51st Battalion of the 2nd Australian Imperial Force and during 1944 and 1945 participated in many fierce battles in New Guinea. In September 1945, the 31st/51st Battalion accepted the surrender of Japan on Ocean Island and Nauru Island and then formed part of the occupation force on Nauru Island and the island of Rabaul.

Since the end of World War II, the Kennedy Regiment has gone through many reorganisations and structural changes. In recent years, the Kennedy Regiment has been actively involved in overseas operations in places such as the Solomon Islands. Despite the many reorganisations and structural changes, including name changes, the unit is still widely known as the 31st Battalion, the Kennedy Regiment, because of its long and proud military tradition. The 31st Battalion is still proudly based in north Queensland.

To conclude, I wish with the forbearance of honourable members to read into the *Hansard* in honour of the 31st Infantry Battalion their regimental march titled *John Peel*—

D'ye ken John Peel, with his coat so gay,
D'ye Ken John Peel at the break of day,
D'ye ken John Peel when he's far, far away,
With his hounds and his horn in the morning?
For the sound of his horn brought me from my bed,
And the cry of his hounds which he oft times led,
Peel's view halloo would awaken the dead,
Or the Fox from his lair in the morning.