



Alf Stone

Constituency Statement

Main Committee

2 June 2011

Sharon Grierson MP

Ms GRIERSON (Newcastle) (11:06): I rise today in sadness to commemorate the life and note with deep regret the death of a very special Novocastrian, Mr Alfred Stone OAM.

Mr Stone, or Alf as he was better known, passed away last week at the age of 92 years. He was a larger-than-life figure in Newcastle—a city with its fair share of characters—and was known equally for his advocacy on behalf of fellow veterans and for his genuine concern for his fellow human beings.

Alf was the long-time president of the Newcastle Ex-Prisoners of War Association. Captured by the Germans in World War II and imprisoned in Stalag 18A in the Austrian Alps. Alf endured years of harsh physical labour and deprivation.

But it was also here that he forged the values of compassion and selflessness that were the hallmarks of his life. He formed lifelong bonds with his fellow inmates, many of whom hailed from around the world. It was here he also formed his lifelong association with the Red Cross.

Having relied on Red Cross parcels to supplement his meagre rations, upon his release he immediately set out to repay the debt he felt he owed to the Red Cross. And he did exactly that, over and over again, working tirelessly to raise funds for the Red Cross until his recent death. But his efforts did not stop there.

His efforts as the welfare officer of the Hamilton Sub-branch of the RSL, assisting countless veterans from Newcastle secure their due

entitlements, were well known and appreciated among the veteran community.

His fellow former POW, Arthur Wade, a former state member of parliament, told me last night that they both almost escaped the enemy in Europe but Alf was captured after he was shot in the leg in Greece and was then interned in Austria. There is a very special regard between POWs and I know that Alf's death will have stirred great memories and emotions amongst his comrades whom he has left behind.

In 1991 his services to his fellow veterans were aptly recognised when he was awarded the Order of Australia Medal. But Alf will be remembered mostly for his genuine warmth as a human being and his constant smile.

He was a regular visitor to my office, brightening our day with his smile and bringing presents of Flanders poppies, which he grew, a symbol of peace that he shared all around Newcastle.

Although we will miss him, his prized poppy seeds will see Alf Stone's unique warmth blooming in many gardens all over Newcastle. Thank you, Alf.

You were a tower of strength, a source of courage and a beacon of inspiration for all who crossed your path.

To quote Arthur Wade once more: 'Alf was a real digger.' Newcastle and Australia will be the lesser for his loss.

We will remember him. Lest we forget.