

Barnaby Joyce attends at Headstone Project event at Wivenhoe

Deceased World War I veterans laid to rest in unmarked graves have been given proper headstones.

The new headstones for 20 veterans were unveiled at the Wivenhoe Cemetery during a ceremony on Friday, with former deputy prime minister and Nationals MP Barnaby Joyce in attendance.

The Headstone Project chairperson Andrea Gerrard said it had taken months for the new resting places to be finalised.

"We will continue to move along the Coast to put up headstones for each veteran whose graves have not been properly marked."

Federal Braddon MHR and former soldier Gavin Pearce attended the event.

"Soldiers, sailors and aviators can deal with the bullets and the bombs - that's what we sign up for," he said in a speech at the event.

"The most difficult things that I've had to do, the things that weigh heavily on my shoulders are the things that happen afterwards.

"I've lost count of the soldiers that I've buried through suicide.

"It's those things that stay with me every single day of my life."

Mr Pearce held several leadership positions while he served in the Army.

"I think, as a commander, those kids under my command; what were they going through before they went through with that," he said.

"I should have seen that as their commander, as their leader, as their boss.

"Why didn't I see it?"

Mr Joyce said he was proud to be at the event unveiling the headstones of veterans in unmarked graves.

"There are so many things that we do in politics where you do it because that's the job," he said.

"You do it respectfully, but you're not as moved by it as you think.

"Ladies and gentlemen, today I am genuinely and properly moved by this. It means an awful lot to me."

Another six deceased veterans will be honoured at a Headstone Project event at the Wynyard General Ceremony on July 1.

ENDS

Article by Simon McGuire