

**VETERANS — JACK LE CRAS
RSLWA VETERAN CENTRAL**

Statement

HON TJORN SIBMA (North Metropolitan) [5.29 pm]: I briefly wish to reflect on two functions I have had the privilege to attend in consecutive days. The first was yesterday's Remembrance Day memorial service hosted by the Naval Association of Australia's Perth North subsection branch, officiated by stalwart Jack Le Cras at the Wanneroo War Memorial. Many members might be familiar with Jack and his story. In self-described terms, yesterday was Jack's swan song. It was the eleventh Remembrance Day service that he conducted at the Wanneroo memorial and that feat was recognised by a low-altitude fly-past at 11 minutes past 11 o'clock, on Jack's strict instructions. That occurred.

Jack recounted his own story, and it is a remarkable life. He was 13 years old and reading the newspaper at the kitchen table when he discovered that the Second World War had been declared. When he was 19 years and one day old, he witnessed the Japanese surrender aboard the USS *Missouri*, a fact, by his own admission, he did not appreciate the full consequence of until many years later. That he bore witness to a significant historical event probably did not register in his mind and probably would not register in the mind of most 19-year-olds. He said he was only there for a few minutes, but he saw General MacArthur and he witnessed the exchange of documents and that was that. Jack has subsequently gone on to live a remarkable life of service, particularly through the Lions Club of Whitford. He is a spritely 94-year-old, I think turning 95 soon. He has the energy of a man many decades younger than he is, and I think that is testament to Jack's drive, his humility and his sense of purpose. He is truly a remarkable person.

That draws me to the second event I attended, and one where Jack was present, and that was the Veteran Central grand opening at the RSL headquarters in the CBD. Finding a new home for RSLWA has been a project embarked upon and supported by both the Barnett and McGowan state governments, and this is a testament to the will and drive of both governments in solving some tricky planning issues. It was also the culmination of the vision of both RSL state president Peter Aspinall and CEO John McCourt to deliver something contemporary that was convenient for members of the veterans community and exists to provide them with the supports that they need in a coordinated, friendly and familiar way. It was an absolute pleasure to attend and a sense of relief and accomplishment that a project that had been so long talked about and was difficult to bring to fruition has finally materialised. All I wish to do is compliment the RSL on its achievement, reflect upon the support of subsequent governments, both state and federal, and look forward to a superior level of service and support for Western Australia's veterans community.