

SIMON WIESENTHAL

Statement by Minister for Citizenship and Multicultural Interests

MR R.C. KUCERA (Yokine - Minister for Citizenship and Multicultural Interests) [12.10 pm]: As Minister for Citizenship and Multicultural Interests, I pay tribute to the late Simon Wiesenthal. My father was a refugee from Eastern Europe and I grew up with many Jewish children and members of the Jewish community whose mothers and fathers suffered under the horrors of the Nazi regime. I have never forgotten seeing the blue-black numbers tattooed on the forearm of my mate Sam's mother. The death overnight of Simon Wiesenthal serves to remind us that we should do whatever we can to ensure the horrors that man did to his fellow man in those bloody days of World War II are not repeated. As Wiesenthal did on every occasion, we should all stand up and speak out against racism, inhumanity and the use of terror to suppress the views and beliefs of others.

Before World War II Wiesenthal was an architect. In the war he was corralled into a Nazi concentration camp - one of five he would survive before being released by United States forces from Mauthausen in May 1945. In setting up the agency bearing his name and devoting 50 years of his life to bringing to justice those who perpetrated the atrocities of the Nazi regime, Wiesenthal was a constant reminder of the Holocaust and its history of inhumanity. I was privileged to meet some of the men who worked with Wiesenthal when I was an officer with the Western Australia Police Service. Their dedication and investigative skills were akin to those of all police officers who work on more mundane, but no less important, investigations. All of them have a driving ethos that people who commit a crime against another should never be allowed to escape without justice being seen to be done.

It was not just anti-Semitism that concerned Wiesenthal, although it was his driving passion. He was, for instance, outspoken about the plight of ethnic Albanians and their suffering and about relations between Muslims and Jews in Europe. In these days of terror and the reaction to it, we must always remember that there must be a balance. The forces of fascism and the forces of terror always lurk just under the surface. We must do all we can to ensure that we are outspoken in our condemnation of it. People like Wiesenthal and their humanitarian beliefs remind us all that we should never forget the horrors of the past and do all we can to prevent them from being visited upon our children and the children of the future.