NUCLEAR WEAPONS

Motion

HON MATTHEW SWINBOURN (East Metropolitan) [11.31 am] — without notice: Thank you, Mr Acting President. I might be in a better state than I was earlier today. I move —

> That this house notes the seventy-fifth anniversaries of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki was observed on 6 and 9 August 2020 respectively, and further notes —
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> (a) that the coronavirus pandemic starkly demonstrates the urgent need for greater international cooperation to address all major threats to the health and welfare of humankind, including the paramount threat of nuclear war;
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> (b) that close to 14 000 nuclear weapons are held between nine nations, presenting an unacceptable risk to humanity;
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> (c) the concerning trend in weakening or undermining arms control agreements by nuclear-armed states, including the Iran deal, the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty and the Treaty on Open Skies;
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> (d) the substantial progress towards entry into force of the 2017 United Nations Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, which will comprehensively outlaw nuclear weapons and provide a pathway to elimination; and
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> (e) that Australia work towards signing and ratifying the TPNW, in line with our international obligations to pursue the elimination of these illegitimate weapons of mass destruction.

As indicated by the time it took to read the motion, it contains a lot. We could move motions on each of these points for many weeks. Unfortunately, we have only 60 minutes allocated for private members' business today, so I will try to unpack as much as I can out of the motion. I would like to start with the opening of my motion, which indicates the marking of the seventy-fifth anniversary last week of the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki by the United States. Saturday, 15 August marked the seventy-fifth anniversary of victory in the Pacific, otherwise known as VP Day. It is clear that these three events are inextricably linked, the orthodox view being that the actions of the United States in dropping the nuclear bombs on 6 and 9 August brought an early end to the war in the Pacific and saved many American, and probably Australian, lives. This view is not universally accepted—that is, that those actions brought the war to an early end or that it was either morally or ethically acceptable to use nuclear weapons in the way they were used.

How many American or Australian lives may have been saved is not known. But what is known and what is clear is the number of lives that were lost when those two bombs were dropped on those two cities. There are no exact numbers because Japan and other countries were in a state of war at the time and many people were moving in and out of certain cities. However, the estimates of the immediate impact of the bomb range from between 90 000 and 140 000 people killed immediately or in the immediate aftermath of the Hiroshima bombing and 60 000 to 80 000 people killed in Nagasaki. That is an incredible number of people who died from two single acts—the dropping of two bombs. Those figures do not take into account the injuries that occurred as a consequence of the dropping of those bombs. Those two cities were mostly made out of wood and glass. Many of the injuries involved splinters and cuts caused by the shock wave of the explosion. Many injuries were overwhelmingly heat related, with people's skin literally falling off their bodies. Those injuries were dire, and many people died afterwards.

It is estimated that over 300 000 survivors later died from the effects of the bombing. Talking about numbers always makes it seem like there is some sort of moral calculus to work out whether this is worthier than that based on the total number of lives lost or saved. It is a very slippery slope to go down if we start doing that. We know about the impacts. Some of the other impacts were the birth defects from radiation exposure of children born following the dropping of the bombs. What is often not talked about but also important is the impact on the environment after the dropping of those two bombs—the plants, wildlife and animals that died and suffered as a consequence. Not much account was given to that at the time because perhaps it was not considered as important or even relevant. In this context, we must consider the impact that nuclear weapons have on not only people, but also our environment. Although there were military installations in both Hiroshima and Nagasaki, they were not significant. The victims of the bombings were overwhelmingly civilians—children, women, people with disabilities and the elderly.

The rules of conventional war are that civilian populations should not be deliberately targeted. However, in this instance, those rules were clearly ignored. The United States understood the impact of the bombing that it was going to engage in and proceeded with it anyway. Other bombing occurred in Tokyo, with firestorms caused throughout the city, and there was the bombing of Dresden by the British at the end of the Second World War, both of which also resulted in significant loss of life.

It may not be known by many members, but the Americans had not bombed Hiroshima and Nagasaki in any significant way leading up to the dropping of the nuclear bombs because they wanted to see the impact of a nuclear weapon on a human population and a city. Essentially, they were untried weapons and they wanted to see what effect they had. For me, that reinforces that the use of a nuclear weapon is morally repugnant. In today's terms, the nature of the bombs that were dropped is considered very low yield. The bomb that was dropped on Hiroshima yielded only about 16 kilotons, which is not of any significance compared with modern-day nuclear weapons.

I had the privilege of visiting Japan last year. I deliberately made sure that I went to Hiroshima to see the site where the bomb was dropped. I visited the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Park, which was very moving. We laid a wreath at the shrine dedicated to those people who died. The Japanese continue to inter the remains of people who die beneath the shrine. I also visited the museum and had the great privilege of meeting a survivor of the bombing. I cannot emphasise enough the effect that speaking with her had on me about the impact of nuclear weapons on people. Her name is Keiko Ogura. Keiko was only eight when the *Enola Gay* dropped the bomb on Hiroshima. She was able to speak about her experience of living through the dropping of the bomb. She described herself as being lucky that day. Her father did not send her to school. The rest of her schoolfriends did not survive. She spoke about the impact of the bomb, which demolished their house. She had to dig her younger brother out of the rubble. She witnessed people coming away from the epicentre of the bomb with their skin literally falling off their bodies. She gave them water, which consequently caused them to die after drinking the water because that is not something that should be given to someone suffering from radiation burns. She carried the guilt of doing that for many years. An eight-year-old carried that guilt—a child. Fortunately for me, she spoke English exceptionally well, so I was able to understand the full impact of her words. Interestingly, she had quite high regard for Australians, because following victory in the Pacific, Australians went into Hiroshima and were involved in helping with reconstruction and doing a number of activities. She said she always thought of Australians as being tall, blond and white, and she had a lot of regard for them.

Ogura has spent much of her time in recent years—she is in her 80s now—campaigning against nuclear weapons. Of course, since the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, a nuclear weapon has not been used in the course of conventional warfare. However, many, many nuclear weapons have been detonated around the world, bringing about destruction of, and a long-lasting impact on, the environment. Australia has of course experienced this, with weapons testing occurring at Maralinga in South Australia, and also here in Western Australia, with the nuclear tests that occurred on the Montebello Islands. Three tests were undertaken there by the British military, including the largest nuclear explosion in Australia at 98 kilotons. Remember, the bomb dropped on Hiroshima was only 16 kilotons; we have had a nuclear explosion in our own territory of much greater significance than that. The nuclear fallout from these tests has reached Perth. I am not quite sure what impact it has had on the health of our population, but it also reached as far away as Queensland. The impact of nuclear testing on the Aboriginal people in South Australia who were left within the blast radius and zones, and also on their ability to go back to their traditional homelands, are becoming more well known.

Following the Second World War, there was a nuclear arms race. Currently, 14 000 nuclear weapons are held by nine nations. The rationale, of course, for having so many nuclear weapons is the theory of deterrence. The deterrence theory holds that the threat of using nuclear weapons against the enemy prevents the enemy's use of those nuclear weapons. This theory is often described as mutually assured destruction, or MAD for short. I think it truly is a mad theory. Of the nine nations with nuclear capacity, I ask members which one of those nations they trust. Do they trust France, Britain, the United States, Russia, Pakistan, India, China, Israel or North Korea? That policy of deterrence is only as reliable as the least reasonable person with their finger on the button. Do members trust the leader of North Korea, who has his finger on the button? Do they trust Vladimir Putin or Donald Trump, who have their fingers on the button? These people hold the future of humanity in their hands. A policy such as that is only as reliable as the least reliable link in the chain.

The nuclear arms race has been going since the Second World War. Following the Cuban missile crisis, when we essentially got to one minute before midnight on the doomsday clock—people were holding their fingers over the buttons—there has been a growing chorus of voices, particularly from civil society, for the disarmament of our nations with nuclear weapons. Other weapons of mass destruction are considered to be morally repugnant and have been banned, including chemical weapons, mines and cluster bombs, but there still remains no universal ban on nuclear weapons. Through the 1960s, 1970s and into the 1980s, a number of treaties were entered into that reduced the type and nature of nuclear weapons. Those actions were actively engaged in by the superpowers. Some of the more peripheral countries, of course, are not parties to those treaties. Those initiatives were largely driven by civil society groups like the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons. For those who do not know about ICAN, this civil society campaign originated in Melbourne in 2006 and now has more than 500 partner organisations in 100 countries. It has 80 partner organisations in Australia. ICAN was awarded the 2017 Nobel Peace Prize for its work in drawing attention to the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of any use of nuclear weapons and for its groundbreaking efforts to achieve a treaty-based prohibition of such weapons.

Unfortunately, a number of steps have been taken by the nuclear states in particular to undermine our attempt to make our world a nuclear-free place. This includes the undermining of the Iran deal, particularly by the United States. Unfortunately, time does not permit me to go into any great detail on that. Needless to say, we were working towards Iran not becoming one of the nuclear states; however, the actions of those who have influence resulted in a televised address on Friday, 31 July by the religious leader of Iran, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, who declared that Iran would expand its nuclear program. That cannot be good for anyone. We have seen the undermining of the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty, which was signed by the United States and the Soviet Union in December 1986. This treaty saw more than 2 690 missiles eliminated. However, there is a he-said, she-said situation between the US and Russia about who is complying with the treaty and who is not. I do not really care who wants to point the finger and who first said that the other was not complying with the treaty; what I would really like to see is them sit down together and work towards giving full effect to that treaty, instead of blaming each other. Unfortunately, the US suspended its compliance with the treaty in 2019 and formally withdrew in August last year. It really is quite alarming that that is the trend. That trend was further reinforced by the Treaty on Open Skies, which was signed by the United States, Russia, Canada and a number of European countries. That treaty relates to parties conducting unarmed observation flights over other parties' territory to detect whether another country is preparing for military action. It is essentially that these nations are watching each other in a way that they understand they are watching each other. The treaty was designed to help build confidence and transparency between nations. However, the United States also formally withdrew from this treaty in May 2020.

It would probably alarm most people to know that it is estimated that in 2019, the countries with nuclear weapons spent $72.9 billion to upgrade their nuclear weapons. We debated a motion earlier today about homelessness. I can only imagine the effect that putting $72.9 billion into homelessness activities around the world would make to people's lives, rather than going to the upgrading of nuclear weapons.

In 2017, the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons was open for signature. It currently has 82 signatures from 43 state parties. It will come into force once 50 states ratify the treaty. Unfortunately, Australia has not ratified the treaty. As it currently stands, the commonwealth government does not propose to sign that treaty. My view is that that position should not be maintained and that Australia should sign it. In conclusion, nuclear weapons are morally repugnant and indefensible. They are a continuing threat to humankind and the environment. Australia should ratify the treaty, as should all the nuclear weapons states. I commend the motion to the house.

HON PIERRE YANG (South Metropolitan) [11.47 am]: This is a very important motion and it is a very important issue. I would like to thank Hon Matthew Swinbourn for bringing this motion on for debate today. As members know, this year marks the seventy-fifth anniversary of the end of World War II. That war involved many countries around the world and many millions of people died as a result. The bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki happened at a very late stage of World War II. At the time, the Japanese empire was preparing for allied forces to launch an attack on their home islands. The allied forces were on their way to bring war to an end by launching attacks on Japanese home soil. Then the United States of America bombed Hiroshima and Nagasaki, on 6 and 9 August 1945 respectively. There have been many arguments about the use of those atomic bombs. As we have heard from Hon Matthew Swinbourn, the sheer destruction that is caused by the indiscriminate nature of atomic bombs makes them a very immoral and unethical weapon.

From my experience in the Army, many types of weapons, including landmines, were prohibited. Because of the indiscriminate nature and unnecessary pain and suffering caused, certain weapon types are banned by the Australian military. The indiscriminate nature of atomic bombs, which kill everyone by their force, is a truly sad thing. We know wars are bad; wars are terrible things that human beings invented. As we heard from Hon Matthew Swinbourn about the experience of the eight-year-old survivor, it is truly terrible. At the same time, arguments were made that the bombing of Nagasaki and Hiroshima hastened the end of World War II. However, my questions are: What did that eight-year-old child do to deserve that kind of suffering and guilt that she lives with? What about the victims who were killed from the bombing who did not support the military effort of the Imperial Japanese Army? I hope human beings have learnt from the past so that when we are involved in conflicts about things such as liberal democracy, we resolve our differences with words and reason and rationale rather than by using force.

It is estimated that 130 000 to 226 000 people lost their lives as a result of the two bombings. We all know that the destruction of atomic bombs is somewhat limited compared with what we have nowadays. The destruction and possibility of using them is ever-increasing as close to 14 000 warheads are in the weaponry of the nine nuclear states. These are very serious issues. From my research I have found that throughout human history, since the mention of the atomic bomb we have come close to the end of the world 13 times. There were 13 times when instructions were given by mistake or radar detected wrong signals and triggered the military to be ready to use nuclear bombs on perceived enemies, when in fact no-one was using them. No-one was attacking the state that mistakenly believed it was being attacked. No-one was using it. How many more times do we need to have that occur? It is very important

that we as a species consider this issue and have a good hard look at ourselves. Why do we need these nuclear weapons? Why do we need them? It is truly, truly sad.

I also wish to direct my attention to nuclear energy. I know it is not necessarily covered by the topic of the motion, but it is somewhat relevant. We as a nation have a huge deposit of uranium. I am pleased to see that state Labor governments and the federal government have resisted the temptation of exploiting uranium because of the dangerous nature of nuclear energy. We do not have to look too far to see it. A few years ago, the Fukushima nuclear disaster was triggered by an earthquake and a tsunami and resulted in the technological failure of a nuclear reactor. I do not have time to delve into the detail of it, but that is a recent example of the unstable nature of nuclear energy. I am very glad that Australia has resisted having more nuclear reactors. The Chernobyl disaster in 1986, some 34 years ago, was triggered by man-made problems. The Soviets were trying to test their nuclear reactor to weed out a problem. They actually solved the problem, but in the process they caused an even bigger problem. The result is well known. Sure, these technologies represent a significant change from the technologies of previous generations, but they are unstable technologies that can have significant ramifications and could cause more than the benefit it brings for us. That is why I am particularly pleased to see that Australia as a nation is on the right track with uranium and nuclear energy. It is so important for our children and for their children to live in a country in which nuclear energy is not a primary source. I am sure members of the Greens (WA) would agree with me that there are ample renewable sources that can provide the energy requirements of this nation.

Hon Alison Xamon interjected.

Hon PIERRE YANG: I thank Hon Alison Xamon very much. I always respect her and always value her contribution. I have done so since 2008 when we participated in the articled clerkship program.

In my remaining 30 seconds I want to wholeheartedly support Hon Matthew Swinbourn's motion on this issue. All nations should sign up to the treaty to protect the one Earth we have. As President Emmanuel Macron said, there is planet A; we do not have a planet B. There is only one planet for us.

HON ALISON XAMON (North Metropolitan) [11.57 am]: I rise to speak on this important motion by Hon Matthew Swinbourn, particularly because the issue of nuclear disarmament has been one of the key concerns for the Greens (WA) since our inception as a party and, indeed, was one of the core reasons I joined the party 30 years ago, back in 1990, utterly inspired by former Senator Jo Vallentine, who of course was integral in establishing the Nuclear Disarmament Party, which was one of the founding parties of the Greens (WA). I am beyond pleased to have a parliamentary debate about the need to rid the world of nuclear weapons and to get Australia to sign the United Nations Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. Hon Matthew Swinbourn, the mover of this important and thoughtful motion, Hon Stephen Dawson, Hon Laurie Graham and all my Greens colleagues and I are the only members from this house who are currently listed as having signed the international campaign to abolish nuclear weapons pledge—namely, the ICAN pledge. Among other things, the pledge states —

> … we consider the abolition of nuclear weapons to be a global public good of the highest order …

I suggest this is something that everyone in this house could agree on and so I encourage all members to sign on to that pledge because the horrors of Nagasaki and Hiroshima cannot and should not ever be forgotten. Those events should be seared on our conscience. However, most of the nearly 14 000-strong worldwide arsenal is more powerful that the bombs that were dropped on Japan in 1945. Distressingly, I also note that one or both sides of two of the most fraught international borders in the world are armed with nuclear weapons. The world continues to watch the Kashmir nuclear flashpoint with great concern, and, of course, the border between North Korea and South Korea remains tense and volatile. The potential for these tensions to break the seal on nuclear weapons unfortunately remains very real. The continued deliberate withdrawal of the USA from international nuclear non-proliferation treaties is deeply concerning. A number of the other nuclear-armed powers continue to posture with war games and quite provocative language.

The doomsday clock stands at 100 seconds to midnight and the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists authors who have set the doomsday clock have said the following about the recent nuclear situation —

> In the nuclear realm, national leaders have ended or undermined several major arms control treaties and negotiations during the last year, creating an environment conducive to a renewed nuclear arms race, to the proliferation of nuclear weapons, and to lowered barriers to nuclear war. Political conflicts regarding nuclear programs in Iran and North Korea remain unresolved and are, if anything, worsening. US–Russia cooperation on arms control and disarmament is all but nonexistent.
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> …
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> The world is sleepwalking its way through a newly unstable nuclear landscape. The arms control boundaries that have helped prevent nuclear catastrophe for the last half century are being steadily dismantled.

…

> The demise of the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty became official in 2019, and, as predicted, the United States and Russia have begun a new competition to develop and deploy weapons the treaty had long banned. Meanwhile, the United States continues to suggest that it will not extend New START, the agreement that limits US and Russian deployed strategic nuclear weapons and delivery systems, and that it may withdraw from the Open Skies Treaty, which provides aerial overflights to build confidence and transparency around the world. Russia, meanwhile, continues to support an extension of New START.

Nuclear weapons, by their very nature, are a worldwide threat with long-lasting health and wellbeing implications for not only ordinary people, but also ordinary people who were nowhere near the original explosion, and quite likely for their children and grandchildren, as the mutagenic effects of this type of radiation are well known. We have proven ourselves capable of understanding and reacting to a novel threat like the coronavirus pandemic. We have proven ourselves capable of working across jurisdictions and of responding to changes in the national and international contexts. We have also proven ourselves capable of listening to and understanding the science.

There are many issues on which I would like to see us take this cooperative people first and future first approach, and climate change is obviously one of them, but the absolute good of getting rid of nuclear weapons is also one of them. We are citizens of Western Australia, but we are also citizens of the world, and worldwide issues should and do concern and affect us. Just as we call for action to be taken on climate change here in Western Australia, so we can call for action on ridding the world of nuclear weapons, and we do so. I think it is shameful that Australia has not yet signed the 2017 Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, and I ask every single member in this house to raise this issue with their federal counterparts, and to push for a nuclear-free world.

HON KYLE McGINN (Mining and Pastoral) [12.03 pm]: I, too, would like to thank the mover of this motion, Hon Matthew Swinbourn, who brings very interesting private members' business matters into this chamber. They are always very good to debate, and this is another great motion that the member has brought to the floor of the chamber. He spoke with passion about the experiences he has had, which inspired me to speak today.

When I was eight years old, all I had to worry about was playing rugby league on the weekend. It is devastating to think of the trauma that Hon Matthew Swinbourn's friend in Japan went through. It makes me think about what I thought about war when I was growing up, and the effect war could have on me in the future. Reflecting upon it, when the generation before mine thought about war, it probably thought about and was fearful of the Vietnam War and the draft. I remember many conversations with friends along the lines of, "Well, the next war won't be like that. It'll be just a matter of pushing a button, and we will just have to sit back and watch what happens." Who will push the button first? Who has the bigger button? That is the type of scenario that my friends and I contemplated, and the world we are in today brings us back to that.

People are more educated today about nuclear power in general and the devastating outcomes that come with it. Hon Pierre Yang reflected upon the Chernobyl disaster, and that history hits me very hard. Even the realism of the TV program about Chernobyl was absolutely frightening—to see the effects of reactor 4 blowing up. That was a situation in which nuclear power was not even being used aggressively, so to think that human beings could inflict something like that on other human beings makes me shudder.

Close to 14 000 nuclear weapons are held by nine nations, and one of those nations is run by Donald Trump!

Hon Tjorn Sibma interjected.

Hon KYLE McGINN: I will get to that. I am sorry that mentioning Donald Trump has offended the member!

Several members interjected.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Hon Robin Chapple): Members! This is usually a debate in which we actually have some time to listen and enjoy contributions. Interjections are not warranted.

Hon KYLE McGINN: Thank you, Mr Acting President. That interjection surprised me.

I will get to other leaders eventually, honourable member, but when I think of Donald Trump, I think of some comments he made recently—we could go through hundreds of them—along the lines of, "My people were out there testing for COVID-19 and we're getting all these positive results, so I told them to stop testing, and guess what? There's less COVID-19!" This is from a leader—"Don't worry; it'll be great; it'll be fine; it'll be excellent." Is that what he is going to say after he pushes the button? For that type of power to be in the hands of a man like that is absolutely frightening.

We have also seen the issues in North Korea and the conflicts in Russia. Everyone seems to be measuring the size of their nuclear weapons in public to progress their agendas. To me, that is a really sad state of affairs. We talk about many things in this chamber, such as we did in the previous motion on homelessness. A comment was made

earlier that the money spent on this kind of stuff could be redirected to many worthier issues, such as world hunger. There are countries in which people cannot even put food on the table, and there is the issue of homelessness. We could be doing all these things to make the world better, but, instead, countries choose to make a bigger stand for their nuclear influence. They would probably say that it is to defend themselves, but I feel it is more about progressing their respective views more broadly around the world—which, again, could be done without nuclear weapons. It is 75 years since the first nuclear attack, and we are still talking about the ramifications of what happened in Hiroshima and the resulting death and devastation.

It was interesting to note the discussion around the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. The current federal government does not support it and has put forward a number of reasons for that, but the underlying reason is that Australia's defence would be at risk. To me, through discussions with the United Nations and working together with other countries, we should be able to come to an understanding that it is not acceptable to have a single bomb that can kill 80 000 people, particularly given that there are so many of them around the world. Hon Alison Xamon referred to members of Parliament in this chamber who have signed the treaty. Around 250 Australian federal, state and territory parliamentarians have pledged to work for Australia to sign and ratify the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons and 79 per cent of the Australian public want Australia to join. It is great to see that Australians support Australia being nuclear free.

In December 2018, the Australian Labor government committed to sign and ratify the treaty in a unanimously agreed motion moved by Anthony Albanese, seconded by Richard Marles. Unions also play a massive role in advocating and lobbying for nuclear disarmament. I believe that one of the big supporters in particular in this space is the peak body of trade unions, the Australian Council of Trade Unions. I have been a part of many rallies over the years that other unions have put together in support of this outcome across the world. Something I believe unions do very well is social justice. This is a massive issue for everyone in this world, not just for the leaders. The ramifications are something with which everyone has to live with. If that button is pushed by any nuclear-armed countries, we may not have had a say in it or may not have known about it, but we will definitely have to live through the consequences—and the consequences are dire.

Another issue touched on was Chernobyl, but we cannot talk about nuclear disasters without talking about the Fukushima issues. The Fukushima plant is so close to the ocean that when the problem occurred, radiation leaked into the water. I remember seeing a graphic description of how far it spread. Tuna in America was found to contain readings for radioactive contamination. It is incredible to think that a nuclear power plant going off can have massive ramifications across the world for many years to come. I was a proud member of the Australian Nuclear Free Alliance in the Northern Territory and a supporter of the Western Australian Nuclear Free Alliance, which was fighting very hard against uranium mining in general. If we were not taking it out of the ground and mining it in the first place, we would not be creating these disasters. Another issue is that when we mine uranium and send it overseas, it ends up coming back here in the form of waste, which we, ourselves, then have to store. I was part of a massive dispute in a place in the Northern Territory called Muckaty, which the federal government decided was a great spot to slap in a nuclear waste dump. It took eight years of fighting to stop that despite the elders disagreeing that it should be there in the first place. I could not believe how hard we had to fight to have that decision reversed. There are many dangers in creating a nuclear bomb. What is the offshoot of waste that comes back and is potentially put into the ground that leaks into the ground and poisons the groundwater? There are many types of ramifications.

I wholeheartedly support this motion. I will probably be a little bit corny and finish with: create love, not war.

HON MARTIN PRITCHARD (North Metropolitan) [12.13 pm]: I thank Hon Matthew Swinbourn for bringing this motion to the house; it is a very timely and very good motion. I also want to thank previous speakers because they spoke to the actual motion. Hopefully, it will give me a bit of latitude to make some personal comments about my views and how they have developed over the years.

I became politically active some 40 years ago. A younger version of me would have probably looked at this motion with mixed emotions. I was very supportive of the Australia, New Zealand and United States Security Treaty and wondered why New Zealand would be so mad as to concern itself with what sort of nuclear weapons would be on a boat that went into its shores. I was also very supportive of the concept of mutually assured destruction and at that time thought the acronym did it some injustice. Suffice to say, my views have developed over the years and I will be speaking in favour of this motion. I go back to how wars developed, an issue raised by Hon Kyle McGinn, who spoke just before me and what we expected or how our views on wars have developed. I always go back to the oft-common phrase that was said of the First World War, that it was "the war to end all wars"; of course, it was not.

In 2000, I also had the opportunity of visiting Japan and made the same trip on the bullet train to Hiroshima. It gave me an opportunity to see ground zero of that bombing. I had the opportunity to go to the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Park, or the peace park as it was put to me, to see how, even now, people fold paper into cranes and leave them there

as a momentum so that no-one will recommit those devastating times. I also visited the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum. I agree with the previous speaker that it was a very, very emotional experience. If members get an opportunity to go there, they will find that the whole city gives a real jolt to the system. It gives a very clear perspective of the devastation and the memory of that devastation.

The dropping of the two bombs—the one on Hiroshima and the one on Nagasaki—was from a decision made by the allied forces. They were basically trying to determine how they would finish the war. Really, the war had pretty much been won and it was only a matter of time. The two options were to invade Japan with the losses that would come from that or the other concept that had become recently available to them, which was to drop the atomic bombs. I would not want to have ever been in the position of making that decision. I know I speak from hindsight, but to me, the dropping of the bombs was a blasphemy. In a matter of minutes, they killed some 90 000 mainly civilians and caused ongoing suffering not just in the weeks that followed, but also the years that followed as the effects continued to be felt from generation to generation. To repeat that some three days later in Nagasaki, where some 60 000 mainly civilians were killed, was certainly a shock and certainly brought the end to the war. Better minds than mine might be able to suggest that that was the best way to go. I understand it was a choice of the lesser of two evils but I could not have made that decision. It remains to me, as an older person, to continually test theories about whether the end justifies the means. I suppose that is a bit of a moving feast, depending on the issue. But given adults have to make decisions on behalf of other people, we continually have to think about and determine whether the end does justify the means.

I will talk a little about the countries that have nuclear capabilities. Without trying to be offensive, I will concentrate on the concerns I have with the Trump administration—not because he is the biggest threat, because I do not believe he is. Other threats are more likely to initiate a retaliatory war that atomic bombs have the possibility of creating. Kim Jong-un would have to be a much bigger threat. I will concentrate on Donald Trump because of the younger version of myself thinking about the Australia, New Zealand and the United States Security Treaty and the support that I always thought we should try to cultivate with America. In my role here, I do not tend to look at members across the aisle, who have different thoughts from me, as the enemy in any way. I think they have a different view and, hopefully, with the to and fro of Parliament and such, the right decisions are made. I believe that President Trump is a personality that cannot be trusted to have his finger on the button. He is more concerned about playing internal politics than world politics. One thing that recent times has taught us is that we are not islands; the world is now a very small place. All of us have to take consideration of how the world is impacted by the decisions we make. I do not believe that President Trump does that. He would pretty much do anything to win another term as President. We do not want the fate of the world to be held in the hands of a person like him.

There are other concerns and risks. I am not a great supporter of Boris Johnson either. I have already mentioned Kim Jong-un; there is also Putin—there are certainly other risks. Because of all of the risks involved in this, the treaty on the prohibition of nuclear weapons is really the way to go. The best way that Australia can impact the safety of the world in this area is by signing up to this treaty. I, for one, am very supportive of the motion. I hope Australia can move towards playing its proper part.

HON DR SALLY TALBOT (South West) [12.22 pm]: I thank Hon Matthew Swinbourn for bringing this important motion to the house and giving us a chance to talk about this most critical of issues. I am sorry that we have such a short time to do this.

Point of Order

Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS: Is the government giving a response to the motion before the house today?

Hon Pierre Yang: It is private members' business.

Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS: Yes, but is there a government response?

Hon Alannah MacTiernan: No.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Hon Robin Chapple): I will take the point of order and I will respond. It is my understanding that this private members' time is basically a time allowing backbenchers to make a contribution. Noting the point of order, I think there is some validity in it. I will refer it to the President for a final decision.

Hon Dr Steve Thomas: It does not matter. It is fine; I was just asking.

Debate Resumed

Hon Dr SALLY TALBOT: I was just saying thank you to Hon Matthew Swinbourn for bringing this most interesting and important motion to the house for debate. I am very pleased to make a small contribution this afternoon. The reality is quite simple: Australia must sign the United Nations Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. I do not know why Australia has not signed it yet. We must sign it. For some reason, our commonwealth government is dragging its feet. The party to which I belong, the Australian Labor Party, has committed to signing this UN treaty the moment that it takes federal government. I am very proud of that. I am very proud to be a member

of the Australian Labor Party with that commitment that Australia will become a signatory to the United Nations Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons.

I will start by helping out my Whip, as I always do. As every sensible member of the house does, when the Whip is struggling you come to his rescue. I will be very pleased to tell Hon Pierre Yang what Emmanuel Macron actually said. The honourable member got very close to it. Hon Pierre Yang confessed that he thought he had mangled it, so I thought I would put the record straight for him. Macron may end up being shown to be one of the great peacemakers of the twenty-first century, if he prevails. He is one of the few sane voices in Europe at the moment.

Hon Alannah MacTiernan: And Angela Merkel is a sane voice.

Hon Dr SALLY TALBOT: Angela Merkel, of course, is a second sane voice, but with the exit of the United Kingdom, I think we lost any hope there of an Anglo–Saxon presence in that sanity.

Macron spoke to the joint houses of Congress in April 2018, which, as honourable members will know, was a matter of only days before President Trump pulled out of the Iran deal. When Emmanuel Macron spoke to the two chambers of the American Parliament, he made a big point of being very gentle to the United States while trying to encourage them to stay firm on that track, because of course he is a great believer in nuclear disarmament. Macron was highlighting the differences between the United States and France on the environment in general. He said —

> "By polluting the oceans, not mitigating CO_2 emissions, and destroying our biodiversity—we are killing our planet. Let us face it. There is no planet B," …

This issue is older than any member of this chamber. Even the older members amongst us were not born —

Hon Dr Steve Thomas interjected.

Hon Dr SALLY TALBOT: No; I did the maths, Hon Dr Steve Thomas. I know the member has been around a long time but we are talking about 75 years ago when the atomic bombs were dropped. That was an absolutely critical moment in the history of human civilisation on the planet. It is really from that moment on that I would say a majority of humanity has been trying to get nuclear weapons banned. It certainly provided the major part of the political atmosphere that I grew up in in the United Kingdom; the Ban the Bomb marches were led by some of the great minds of western civilisation, like Albert Einstein and Bertrand Russell. I think the Acting President (Hon Robin Chapple) is nodding. He remembers those days very well, as I do. Still, 75 years later, we are having the same debates. What a truly dreadful thing that is. Why are we all motivated to get up here and talk every day about the fact that we have to change this situation?

Let me step back through that history. I will not go all the way back to 75 years ago; my colleagues have canvassed that very adequately in their contributions to the debate. It was 15 years ago, in May 2005, that one of the original signatories to the Russell–Einstein Manifesto—with which many members of this chamber would be familiar; I think he was the last surviving signatory of that manifesto—wrote an article that was published in the *New York Times* headed "The 50-Year Shadow". Joseph Rotblat was speaking 60 years since the destruction of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. I think it was 50 years after the signing of the Russell–Einstein Manifesto. The putting together of that manifesto is really crucial—that of course has led to a great deal of very well informed debate. Members would know about the Pugwash Conferences; Pugwash named, of course, not after the cartoon character but after the city in Nova Scotia that hosted the first nuclear disarmament conference. There has been a great deal of learned discussion on this subject, largely driven by the outcomes of these conferences. It is worth going back to the 17 May 2005 article in the *New York Times* to see how relevant those sentiments were 60 years after the bombs were dropped and, sadly, to see how relevant they remain today, 75 years after. I just hope that our successors will not be standing here still talking about the 100th anniversary of the dropping of the nuclear bombs without any kind of effective international nuclear disarmament strategy in place. I think that would be very sad. I have drawn members' attention to that article and recommend that they read it.

I finish by saying that it is really important that members of Parliament, as legislators and policymakers, stick up for the fact that Parliaments and governments have a constructive role to play in modern society. It is often suggested that the real power now lies with multinational companies or with extremists who have taken over in various areas and now drive the public debate in a certain direction. This is one area in which governments really do have a responsibility to play a part and in which Parliaments and governments can actually make a difference. How better to combat extremism than by promoting a spirit of international cooperation. It is in that spirit that I talk about modern Europe and how important leaders like Macron and Merkel are to the future of Europe. They are two international leaders who talk about international cooperation and that has never been more important.

Motion lapsed, pursuant to standing orders.