

**YOUTH — ROYAL COMMONWEALTH SOCIETY WESTERN AUSTRALIA'S
SPEECH AND LEADERSHIP CONTEST**

Statement

HON TJORN SIBMA (North Metropolitan) [5.38 pm]: In my capacity as shadow Minister for Youth I attended the final of the Royal Commonwealth Society Western Australia's speech and leadership contest held on 21 July at the Constitutional Centre of Western Australia. The contest promotes a sense of self-confidence and self-reliance, leadership skills and community involvement among young people, particularly those who may not presently see themselves as leaders. The theme for this year's contest mirrored the Commonwealth Secretariat's theme for 2017, "A Peace-building Commonwealth".

The Secretary General of the Commonwealth Secretariat, Rt Hon Patricia Scotland, QC, has herself remarked that the commonwealth family of nations is a much-needed source of strength and hope at a time of global instability and uncertainty.

I can report that the standard coherence and brevity of the speeches were of a kind that would find favour with honourable members here. The originality and passion each student brought to their individual speech was also impressive. Each student in their own way reflected on the history of the British Empire and the commonwealth in measured tones and saw the commonwealth's core beliefs of equality, justice and democracy as essential to preserving the personal dignity of all individuals and complementary to the purpose of pursuing economic advancement among the diverse commonwealth of nations. Encouragingly, the freedoms of speech and trade were identified by students as the virtues integral to a peace-building commonwealth.

I would like to especially acknowledge the junior division finalists, including Molly Howden, Sonja Rehbock, Anna Bullard, and Sophie Carter. I congratulate also the overall winner, Nandu Shibu; winner of the Dr Ken Michael Speech Award, Hannah Reynolds; the winner of the Malcolm McCusker Leadership Award, Zachariah Coleman; and the winner of the Professor Lyn Beazley Encouragement Award, Kaitlyn Stott. Furthermore, I would like to acknowledge all the senior division finalists, including Sagar Badve and Melvin Tom and congratulate the overall winner and winner of the Dr Ken Michael Speech Award, Shraddha Bose-Mandal as well as the winner of the Malcolm McCusker Leadership Award, Ben Caulfield; and the winner of the Professor Lyn Beazley Encouragement Award, Imari Morris.

I regret that I could not attend the senior division final, but if the standard of the junior division final was any indication, I observe that we have many exemplary and articulate, civic-minded young people in this state. They are truly a credit to themselves, their families and their schools, and the future is in safe hands. May I also commend the work of the Royal Commonwealth Society Western Australian branch, which has run youth programs in this state since 1968. I am advised that over the last 15 years, the society has spent over \$1 million of its own funds to run such programs without any significant taxpayer support. The society continues to demonstrate a real commitment to offering young people an education and development program not easily available in schools and that provides a pathway by which young people may become more active and constructive members of the community.