

COMMONWEALTH PARLIAMENTARY ASSOCIATION — REGIONAL SEMINAR

Statement by Member for Southern River

MR P. ABETZ (Southern River) [12.57 pm]: Having observed the Andrew Bolt case and the continuing erosion of the freedom of speech and freedom of religion in nations that have gone down the path of adopting same-sex marriage, I am thankful to have had the opportunity to be one of two representatives of the Western Australian Parliament at the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association—organised Australia/Pacific Regional Seminar for Members of Parliament on the Role of Parliamentarians in the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights, held in Wellington from 30 July to 1 August. Although such conferences tend to be dominated by left-wing politicians—they certainly were there—I was encouraged by the willingness of the islander nation MPs to speak up and insist that their nation's strong Christian heritage be taken into account in the framing of the declaration issued by the conference on its final day. On the first morning one of the islander MPs said he was dismayed that the conference had not begun with prayer. Needless to say, the lefties squirmed in their seats as other islander MPs nodded in approval. From then on each day's proceedings commenced and concluded with prayer, led mainly by islander MPs, a number of whom also serve as pastors in their villages. I was also invited to lead in prayer on several occasions. The conference was my very first experience of participating in a human rights forum. It was a great learning experience for me and I enjoyed active participation in the debate. I also provided leadership so as to remove some of the human rights double-speak language from the Wellington declaration that was issued on the final day.

Sitting suspended from 12.58 to 2.00 pm