

## WORLD WAR II INTERNMENT CAMPS

### *Motion*

**MR P. PAPALIA (Warnbro)** [4.50 pm]: I move —

That this house —

- (1) notes the presence of internment camps in the state of Western Australia during the Second World War for the purpose of detaining “enemy aliens” and prisoners of war and that some “enemy aliens” were transported from Western Australia to internment camps in other states of the commonwealth of Australia;
- (2) acknowledges that amongst the “enemy aliens” interned were people who were either permanent Australian residents born in Australia or had become British subjects in accordance with commonwealth of Australia immigration and citizenship laws of the day;
- (3) accepts that the overwhelming majority of the people interned at the camps were law-abiding, had made a valuable contribution to Australian society and had posed no threat to the security of the nation or its people;
- (4) believes that most people were primarily interned in the camps on the basis of their cultural heritage or the mistaken belief that it posed an unreasonable risk, and not for any demonstrated or validated criminal or security concerns;
- (5) is aware of research and personal histories that demonstrate that the internment experience had a long-term detrimental impact on the health and welfare of many of the people interned;
- (6) recognises the pain, suffering, grief and hardship experienced by the people who were interned and their families and, in particular, the impact on mothers and wives who were left to care for children, homes, farms or businesses without government assistance;
- (7) congratulates those internees and their families who made the decision to remain in Australia and rebuild their lives following their internment;
- (8) celebrates the lives of those former internees and families who, despite their internment experiences, went on to make a significant contribution to the economic, social and cultural development of Australia;
- (9) asserts that, while the internment policy was implemented in the circumstances of a national emergency, it nevertheless acknowledges that the injustice experienced by some Australians was unnecessary and avoidable; and
- (10) hopes that as a maturing nation we have learnt from the World War II internment experience to ensure that future generations of migrants to this country are treated with justice and equality before the law and are not discriminated against on the sole basis of their cultural heritage.

I place on the record that I move this motion in conjunction with my colleagues the members for West Swan and Armadale and with the support of members opposite who share Italian heritage. I would like now to address the motion in a little detail.

Firstly, I thank you, Mr Speaker, for authorising a small deviation from convention on this occasion so that we have been able to replicate as closely as possible a motion passed by the South Australian Parliament earlier this year. I must also place on the record our thanks to the member for Light in the South Australian Parliament, Tony Piccolo, chair of the Forum of Italo–Australian Parliamentarians and the driving force behind this renewed effort to acknowledge the history of World War II internees. The motivation for the member for Light to introduce this motion into his Parliament and to seek to have it replicated in other state and territory Parliaments is a desire to acknowledge the injustice done to many thousands of good Australians before the last of their number passes from this life. This is a noble objective, which I am sure will be endorsed and supported by all members.

We are reminded of the urgency of this mission through reflecting on the presence here in WA of one of those few remaining survivors, Mr Tom D’Orsogna. Tom arrived in WA in 1933 as a 15-year-old and with his older brother joined their father working in the goldfields at Wiluna. When war broke out in September 1939, Tom had a job at the meat processing factory in Wiluna. He was sacked three days after the war began. In June 1940 Tom, who was by that time prospecting near Mount Vernon, was arrested by police and soldiers and taken to Fremantle. There followed a three-month stint in Fremantle Prison, followed by 18 months in Harvey internment camp, seven months in Kalgoorlie and a final two years at the Loveday internment camp in South Australia. At

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93 years of age, Tom is a high-profile Western Australian who endured the hardship of internment and went on to make a considerable contribution to Western Australian society, eventually establishing with his brothers the well-known and successful business D'Orsogna Brothers.

Tom's experience mirrored that of many other Western Australians who had travelled from Italy and had made this place their home. When war was declared in 1939, a large share of Australia's Italian residents were living in WA, largely because of the lure of jobs associated with the rejuvenation of the gold industry. As a consequence, in this state people of Italian extraction made up the majority of internees. Furthermore, Western Australians of Italian origin made up the greatest proportion of all Australian-Italians who were interned across the nation. During the first year of the war, 1 044 people of Italian origin were interned in WA from a total of 1 901 for the entire nation. By the war's end, 4 727 Australians of Italian origin had experienced internment. My own grandfather Vincenzo was amongst that number. He had fought in the Italian Army during the First World War. Having left Europe shortly after the war in search of a better life, he established himself and brought his wife to join him, and by the outbreak of the Second World War was living in Brunswick Junction with his wife, three sons and a daughter—all children born in Western Australia. Like many others, he was taken from his family without evidence of any threat to national security. My father, who is here today, recalls as a seven-year-old the local police sergeant pulling his car up and allowing him and his older brother Joe to bid their father farewell as he was taken without warning to the Harvey internment camp. My uncle Amando, who is also in the Speaker's gallery, has a clear memory of the family home being raided and torn apart in their father's absence in search of a concealed weapon following a false report. It is a regular feature of internees' stories that the facts surrounding their experience are blurred or even concealed. Whether it is a reflection of some level of shame, a desire to suppress bad memories or an effort to leave the experience behind them and get on with their lives, it seems that many internees spoke little of their experience following their release.

Late last year, I learnt from Tom D'Orsogna that my grandfather went with Tom from Harvey to Kalgoorlie and on to the Loveday camp in South Australia where many thousands of Western Australians were sent. Tom was able to fill in many of the blanks in my grandfather's internment story. Indeed, my dad and his brothers were until this year under the impression that their father had remained in WA throughout his internment.

I then heard from Peter Tagliaferri that my grandfather had also been interned with Peter's father and grandfather and was returned from South Australia to WA in 1943 in their company. Peter supplied me with a document from the National Archives of Australia. It is a minute from the deputy director of security for Western Australia. According to my notes, it is entitled "Release of Internees of Italian Origin" and reads, without a skerrick of irony, as follows —

The Director General of Security has notified this office that it is proposed to release from internment the undermentioned naturalised British subjects of Italian origin —

I emphasise that they were naturalised British subjects and were known to be such —

as soon as your Department is able to arrange employment for them in Western Australia.

Will you please notify this Office as soon as employment is available for each man. In the case of those underlined, it is desired that employment be found NOT in their home town.

And Peter's grandfather's name is underlined —

As all these men are at present in South Australia, the question of transport may, of course, cause some delay between receipt of your notification and the time when the man is actually available to start work in Western Australia.

The fact that thousands of Australian citizens were incarcerated without cause is worthy of some reflection. In my own family's case, there is a further very clear demonstration of the irrational and unjustified nature of the vast majority of internments. My uncle Joe, dad and Amando's older brother who could not be here today, went on to serve in the Australian Army during the Korean War. He saw service in the Royal Australian Regiment as a machine gunner in Korea with the 1<sup>st</sup> battalion RAR and the 2<sup>nd</sup> battalion RAR from 24 July 1952 to 20 July 1953—hazardous war service as a digger not 10 years after his own father's release from internment in Australia as an "enemy alien".

The first effort by this Parliament to acknowledge the injustice of World War II internment was made in August 1991. At that time, this Parliament did not appear capable of passing a motion of this nature, and, instead, the Premier of the day, Hon Carmen Lawrence, hosted a reconciliation dinner at the Parliament for representatives of the internee community.

We have come some way since 1991. Not only are we comfortable about acknowledging this wrong here in the Parliament, but also we as a community are doing more to tell the story. We have here today the great-grandson

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of an internee, Daniel Tenni, who, with other young moviemakers, has produced an award-winning short film illustrating the story of Italian World War II internees. Daniel is also working on recording the story more comprehensively in the form of a locally produced documentary and, ultimately, a feature-length film.

In closing, I would like to particularly thank those family members and friends of Western Australian internees who have honoured us with their presence today. I am thankful that we have been able to more formally acknowledge this injustice while fine Australians like Tom D’Orsogna and the children of other internees are able to witness it. Theirs is a story worth retelling, and from which we can all draw lessons. As Tom D’Orsogna says, what happened to him and thousands of others affected by Australia’s internment policy should never be repeated because it was discriminatory and unjust.

Opposition members: Hear, hear!

**MR F.A. ALBAN (Swan Hills)** [5.01 pm]: I rise to support this motion. As the basis of my support, I will repeat the part of the motion that recognises the pain, suffering, grief and financial hardships, which probably took years to recover from, experienced by the families of migrants who were interned. I particularly refer to the mothers, wives and children who were left to care for their homes, farms and businesses without the support and protection of their men and without any assistance whatsoever.

Today I am speaking from memory—memories that are just as vivid today as they were 56 years ago. They are memories that still fill me with sadness, particularly about the disrespect and mistreatment of my own Italian parents—Ernesto and Antoinetta—and those like them. The Minister for Citizenship and Multicultural Interests, Hon John Castrilli, is unavailable today, and I register his apology and speak on his behalf. John and I have much in common; we are both of a similar age, both from the same circumstances, and both arrived in the 1950s as post-war migrants some 10 years after the internments. I speak, of course, from an Italian perspective.

Interned pre-World War II migrants included many who were born here, as has already been mentioned, or had become Australian citizens. Most were law abiding and hardworking members of our Australian society. It is acknowledged that the internment of these people had a detrimental impact on both the health and welfare of these migrants. One such person who played very much a mentor role to the many new Italians of the post-war era of 1950s and 1960s was a gentleman called Bill Della Vedova. He was about my dad’s age, and his father was Dom Della Sr. Bill retold stories of bashings and insults that these people had to endure and that he witnessed as a boy. I documented this in my inaugural speech. This conduct continued well into the 1960s. No, they were not isolated cases, and names such as wog, dago, salami muncher and spaghetti muncher were commonplace.

I would like to retell a story that the late Bill Della told me some time ago. Bill was 18 years old when his father, Dom, was interned for four years. His father had migrated to Australia in 1929; he had become an Australian citizen, and his brother, Peter, was a sergeant in the Australian Army. After arriving in 1929, it was some seven years later that he could afford to have his family in Australia. That was not uncommon. The men would come to Australia, make a place for their family, find a way to provide for the family’s journey over here, and then they would continue as a family. Dom’s family finally arrived from northern Italy in 1936. His wife arrived with Bill—his only son—and his two young daughters, and they settled on a bush plot some 10 kilometres from Pemberton. My family had a similar journey some years later. Can members imagine clearing the karri and jarrah trees to farm? There cannot possibly be anything harder in this world.

Dom’s internment in 1941, at the age of 40, left his family exposed and facing extreme financial hardship. Bill—the only son and then only 18 years old—had to pay for the farm and support the family. None of the family could speak English, and they could not go to school because they were needed on the farm.

One of the many incidents recounted to me by Bill prior to his passing was that at the age of 18 he would ride their horse into town for supplies. He was obviously, by then, the man of the house. On one occasion he was bashed by the local policeman and another grown man—no doubt their contribution to the war effort—and it was obviously unprovoked. Bill, so as not to worry his mother and father, had to tell them that he had fallen from his horse. These were the circumstances they had to live with. I personally saw this ugly side of some Australians during the 1950s and 1960s. Most migrants, as mentioned by the member for Warnbro, suffered silently; they did not speak out.

As Dom Jr—Bill’s son—recently said, “They were pioneers; they were real men. They put their head down and worked and took their place in the community.” Dom Sr, apart from being a very successful farmer, was one of the founding members of the Manjimup Rotary Club. The Della family thrived in the Pemberton district, and are now a well-known and respected part of that community.

Their story is multiplied many times in the south west of Western Australia, where we grew up. Many of the Italian surnames of the farming families bear testament to the struggle and success of those early migrants and

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pioneers. The enormous contribution socially, economically and culturally of pre-war and post-war migrants to the prosperity of this state and the whole of Australia is well documented.

This acknowledgement today is well and truly overdue. Though migrants have never once asked for any consideration, they have proved their worth by their actions and by their success. This was a dark chapter in our Australian history and it is appropriate that it is acknowledged in this house today. I can only imagine what internment was like—its effect, its consequences and its insult. I am proud as a Western Australian member of Parliament of Italian descent to make this acknowledgment; I am also proud to give a voice to those who are no longer here to speak for themselves.

**MS R. SAFFIOTI (West Swan)** [5.08 pm]: I rise to support this motion. As the daughter of Italian migrants, I stand to acknowledge what happened during a part of Western Australian history of which we should all be ashamed. When we have talked about this issue over recent months, a lot of people have asked why we are doing it; it is for a number of reasons. Firstly, I think we have to recognise the efforts being made by the member for Light in South Australia for having a motion similar to this passed in South Australia. I also think it is very important that people of my generation and the next generation understand and acknowledge what many of our grandfathers and great-grandfathers went through. I think that is why it is important for this Parliament to take this opportunity to acknowledge that part of history. Although my father or grandfathers were not interned, my father knew many people who were taken away from their families in the middle of the day or night—whenever. When we read the list in the national archives of those who were interned, they are very familiar names; they are people we know through business and socially. Many families throughout Western Australia were affected by this.

I had the opportunity, along with the member for Warnbro and Mr Tom D’Orsogna, to visit Fremantle Prison that day and see the emotional impact of being interned. It is very difficult, I think, to try to understand or comprehend the impact it must have had on his family to have their father taken away in front of their eyes for no apparent reason. I am very proud to talk to this motion. As the member for Warnbro outlined, it is important to note that in 1991 the then Premier Carmen Lawrence had a reconciliation dinner here to recognise Italian World War II internees. I would like to acknowledge Sonia Turkington, who is here in the chamber today. I understand that at the time she did a lot of work to have this issue raised in government. As acknowledged by the Premier in the Parliament in 1991, she chaired a committee, and was one of the people who made representations to the government about having that function at the time. I would like to acknowledge Sonia in the Speaker’s gallery today, and the others in the gallery, including representatives from the Italian community, but moreover others who have had personal experience in this matter. Thank you for making the effort to come to the Parliament this evening.

I will refer in part to the speech that Premier Carmen Lawrence gave that evening —

In 1939 a large proportion of Australia’s Italian residents lived in Western Australia, largely because of the rejuvenation of the gold industry and the availability of jobs. So it was in this State that the largest number of Italians was interned. During the first year of the war 1044 were interned in Western Australia, out of a total of 1901 for Australia as a whole. By the end of the war 4727 Australian-Italians had experienced internment.

The internments were carried out under the provisions of the National Securities Regulations of 1939 which were, in hindsight, extremely harsh. Those who faced immediate internment included not only those who were suspected of espionage or of belonging to the Communist or Fascist organisations, but also those whose occupations were thought to offer any opportunity whatsoever for espionage or sabotage.

Particularly hard hit were the Fremantle fishermen who had their boats confiscated and moored in the Canning River for the duration of the war.

At that time she acknowledged the impact this policy had on Italians living in Western Australia. I would like to go through the personal experience of two Italians who were interned, and the recollections from their family. I will start with Armando Pastorelli, the great-grandfather of Daniel who works in my office. Armando Pastorelli was born on 4 November 1896 and was captured on 14 June 1940 at the age of 44. Daniel wrote some notes regarding his great-grandfather, which I will read out —

Having arrived in Australia in 1927 to work, without his family, Armando had been a resident in Australia for over 13 years at the time of his capture.

Armando worked in gold mine at Mount Monger, near Kalgoorlie. He would work very hard to make enough money to support himself and his wife and children back in Italy. Armando was captured and was interned as he was classed as an “enemy alien”.

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The story behind his internment was because at the time, a small amount of Italian's regularly met to catch up and do what they would usually do in their homeland, before places like the Italian Club were founded. One of the leaders of this group had a notebook of all members, their names and addresses. This notebook was found and on this basis because Armando's name was included in the contact list, he was therefore interned.

Armando was transferred to the Rottnest camp on 27<sup>th</sup> of July, before being transferred to the Harvey camp on 5<sup>th</sup> of October 1940.

After spending two years at Harvey, Armando was transferred to Loveday in South Australia like a number of Italians in Western Australian. He spent 13 months in South Australia before being released on the 27<sup>th</sup> of November 1943.

Armando was interned for three years and four months—for no reason except for being Italian.

For over three years his family in Italy were continually worried about Armando. Armando was a father and a husband. His family in Italy, survived on the financial support of Armando, however while he was interned for over three years, he was unable to support his family as he was no longer working. In addition it prevented him from saving his money to one day bring his family to Australia to start a new life.

I think it is important to note that because Armando was interned, the inability to fund his family's travel to Australia was prolonged for years. The notes continue later —

The first time he saw any of his family, was when his son, Antonio, came to Australia for work in October, 1950. The last time they saw each other was before Armando came to Australia in 1927, his son Antonio was 3 years of age at the time.

It wasn't until 1955, 28 years later, when he was reunited with his wife after she and other members of the family ... came to Australia to begin their new life.

I think that shows the impact that internment had on that family and the enormous emotional pain and stress that that family endured. Daniel has also provided me with a report on internees and other copies of original forms for his great-grandfather, but those notes were a clear personal account of the impact that internment had on that family—it is hard to imagine Armando having to wait 28 years to bring his wife across to Australia because he did not have the financial ability to fund that travel.

I would also like to provide an insight into the family of Mrs Rose Marchei, who is in the Speaker's gallery as well today. This is about Fortunato di Giuseppe Marchei. I have with me a dossier that was signed in 1943 on 14 October by the deputy director of security for Western Australia. This outlines why they believed Fortunato should be interned. I will read through some parts of the document to give members an insight into what happened during these processes. The case was put that —

1. Marchei is an Italian enemy alien. He is 32 years of age. He came to Australia as lately as February, 1939.

He is not married. His parents are in Italy. One brother is in Western Australia: another is an Italian P/W in South Africa.

2. He served in the Italian Army for about 3 years ... including 18 months in Abyssinia.

3. He was interned in June, 1940 for general security reasons. He applied for leave to appeal to the Aliens Tribunal, but leave was refused.

...

5. He is on the roll of True Italians in Loveday Camp.

6. On 2 Aug. 43 writing to his brother in South Africa he said—"you ask me whether I am going to stay in Australia. No. As soon as my imprisonment is finished I shall embark for Italy."

RECOMMENDATION:

It is recommended that Marchei remain in internment.

I also have a copy of the letter from Fortunato that is addressed to the deputy director of security in Adelaide. It reads —

I am 33 years old, healthy and willing to work. I arrived in Australia early on 1939, joined my brother a naturalized British subject residing at Paynes Find, W.A. and worked with him in a gold mine until I

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was interned. I suppose I am interned because of my Italian nationality. But apart from this I do not think there is anything else preventing my release.

I have always been a law abiding citizen in Italy and in Australia and if I am allowed to go out and work you may rest assured that my behaviour will be excellent under every respect.

I am a labourer and prepared to accept any work in any part of Australia though I would like to work with my brother—I have appeared before Capt. Sexton in November last. On that occasion I did not make my intention clear and my feelings were confused. Now I realize the situation, and I am fully convinced that my country is fighting on your side.

This being so, I feel perfectly right in working for you loyally and honestly, if you give me such an opportunity.

Yours respectfully,

(sgd.) Fortunato MARCHEI.

That was a letter asking for release. Those two examples give members what is only a snapshot of what was experienced at that time by these people. As other members have stated, members of the Italian community are very proud people, and the ability to acknowledge what has happened is not something that many have asked for, but it is very important.

Many of the Italians who were interned moved on very quickly. They began businesses, they worked in government and they went on to make lives in Australia for themselves and their families. I think it is important that this Western Australian Parliament acknowledges what they went through. As I said, from my perspective it is very difficult to comprehend someone having their father or husband taken away from them, as the main breadwinner, when they are in a foreign land without the support networks or even the assistance there is today. As a mother of three, to think that my children would not be growing up with their father, after he had been taken away for no reason whatsoever, again, is very, very difficult to comprehend. That is why it is very important for this Parliament today to acknowledge what happened and to ensure that we learn from those mistakes and that it never happens again.

I also want to pay tribute to many of those people in the gallery. To Daniel, the great-grandson of an internee, who is working with a group of people to develop a documentary and, hopefully, a film; it is very important to retell this experience to a wider audience. True stories are often the best in a sense, and the idea of having a young Australian–Italian working on them is incredible. I hope through this process, and through the process of having wider exposure, Daniel gets the support he needs to do this movie because, as I said, this is an important story to be told for generations to come. I am proud to be able to stand today and acknowledge what occurred. I send my sincere sympathy to those people who experienced what they experienced, and I cannot even begin to understand what the families would have been going through having had, in many cases, the breadwinner taken away after coming to a foreign land. It is incredibly difficult to try to comprehend.

I want to again acknowledge that the Italian community in Western Australia is very strong and will continue to be very strong. As we know, a number of parliamentarians are Italian, both on this side and the other side. There are many southern Italians, which makes me very proud; there are many Calabrians. The Italian community is well represented nowadays in politics, business, sport and in every field. I think it is again a demonstration of the work ethic and the strength of those people who came to Australia that the Italian community has played such a vital and integral role in the development of what Western Australia is today.

**DR A.D. BUTI (Armadale)** [5.24 pm]: I am also very proud to stand today to talk on this motion moved by the member for Warnbro. It is interesting that although this acknowledgement is not specific to Italians, there is no doubt that in Western Australia most of the internees during the Second World War were of Italian origin. I think it is very good to reflect upon how many members of Italians origin or heritage there are in this house. I think there are six—three on the opposition side and three on the government side.

**Mr R.F. Johnson:** And an honorary one!

**Dr A.D. BUTI:** And one honorary one! Also, the member for Victoria Park is married to an Italian, so he claims honorary status as well. I think there are 39 parliamentarians in the Parliaments of Australia of Italian background. As far as I am aware from what the member for Light in South Australia has told me, that is the highest number of any immigrant population of parliamentarians in Australia. I would like to thank the member for Warnbro and also my colleagues on both sides of the house —

**Mrs M.H. Roberts** interjected.

**Dr A.D. BUTI:** Why not?

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I would like to thank the member for Warnbro for moving this very important motion.

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** Members!

**Dr A.D. BUTI:** As was mentioned by the member for Light when he brought this motion before the South Australian Parliament, this is an acknowledgement, not a statement of “sorry”, but I want to talk about the word sorry a bit later in my contribution. This motion acknowledges part of Australian history—a part of history that I do not think we should necessarily be proud of, but it is an acknowledgement of it and not an apology as such. Unlike the member for Warnbro, I did not have family members who personally experienced internment during the Second World War. My father came out to Australia in the 1950s and my maternal grandfather, who was living here, either passed away just before or in the early stages of the Second World War; he lived in Yarloop. I did not know about the whole issue of Italians being interned during the Second World War; I think many Australians did not know about it. I came to understand it in the mid-1980s when I was researching a university paper on the history of Italians down in the Harvey region, particularly in the little hamlet of Hamel, which is basically between Yarloop and Waroona and is predominantly occupied by a couple of Italian families from Calabria. I was interviewing some people in Yarloop and Waroona and they told me about how Italians during the Second World War were interned. That was the first time I became aware of it. It was interesting that they told me that many of the farmers in the area did not want the Italians to be interned because they were very reliable workers on the farm. A reliable source of labour was taken away as a result of the Italians being interned because the Italian nation at the time had decided to fight and declare war against the British; that therefore made the Italians in Australia aliens.

It has been stated in this place that Carmen Lawrence made a speech. It was not in this house, but at a dinner held here on 8 August 1991 basically as a form of reconciliation to Italians who were interned during the Second World War. The then Premier said —

As Premier of this State, I am here on behalf of the Government and the people of Western Australia, to acknowledge the emotional trauma and economic hardships suffered by the internees and their families.

I think that is what we are doing today, but we are doing it in the house and it will be recorded in *Hansard* forever and it is our contribution to the people behind us who represent family members. Unfortunately, because of the time that this took place, there are very few internees who are still alive, but their family members, and those internees who are still alive, will hopefully receive some strength from the contributions being made by members on both sides of the house today. As has been mentioned before by some of other speakers, Carmen Lawrence mentioned that the internments took place under the National Security Act regulations of 1939. The Italians were interned because they were Italian—not because they had shown any criminality and not because they had stated that they were at war with Australia. As the member for Warnbro stated, many of them were Australian citizens; they were British subjects under the immigration act of the time. These were nationalised British subjects living in Australia who were interned because they happened to originally come from a nation that at that time was at war with Britain. Hon Carmen Lawrence gave examples of a number of people who were interned. She stated —

For most, internment came as a shock. They had come to Australia to build a new life for themselves and their families, and they had little interest in world affairs. The following tale told by the daughter of an internee is perhaps typical. She said:

‘Just as we finished lunch we heard a car, which was very unusual in those days ... and we looked out and said “Oh Dad, it’s the police there”. And Dad said “Well, let him come in, make him welcome”. So he came in. He says “Are you so-and-so?”. And Dad says “Yes, I am”. He says “I have orders to arrest you”.

And my Dad, I could see him change colour, and he said “Whatever for?”. And he said “It is not my fault, I don’t really want to do this, but I have orders”. And he said “Blame Hitler and Mussolini that they declared war”. And Dad said “What have they got to do with me? I am an Australian citizen”. That family never was able to find out the reason for the father’s internment.’

Hon Carmen Lawrence also talks about the financial hardship. With the men being interned, the source of income for many of the families had just been terminated. The whole story in many respects is the story of the women who were left behind, because it was the women who had to take up supporting the family. It was the women who carried on some businesses that had been established by the Italians before they were interned. It was the women who had to keep the whole house together. Remember that during this period being Italian was very, very difficult, so you can imagine the hostility that many Italians had to experience. These are the ones

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who were not interned. These are the ones who were trying to survive even though their husbands and the major breadwinner of the family had been interned and their source of income had been removed.

In many respects, until the work of the member for Light, Tony Piccolo, this story was untold. It was a silent part of our history in many respects. But over the last two years it has become a bit more prominent. There is an article in “The Conversation”, which is an online website that takes articles from academics. It was published on 6 December 2011. The title is “Why Australia must apologise to Italians interned during World War II” by Mia Spizzica, who is from the historical and philosophical studies department at University of Melbourne. She talks about the history of internment and writes —

Once Italy declared war on Britain and its allies on 10th June 1940, Italian migrants in Australia became political pawns.

And —

Italian immigrants living in Australia were quickly seen as “enemy aliens” during World War II.

Then she states —

Successive Australian governments have been silent on the issue of wartime reparation to civilians who were swept up as “enemy aliens” when their country of birth became a wartime enemy.

She talks about the fact that the families of these interns did not receive support from the government. They had to, as I said, try to work out other forms of income or they had to rely on the good wishes of some other Australians. Organisations such as the Salvation Army were quite prominent in assisting some Italian families. What is interesting in this article is that she congratulates the member for Light for bringing the motion to the house in South Australia but then argues that it does not go far enough. She states —

No nation has a monopoly on unfair treatment of enemy civilians and Australia was not immune to abuses against the most vulnerable migrants from enemy nations. But must Italian migrants accept their wartime sufferings in silence simply because Fascist Italy decided to declare war on Britain?

Most pre-war Italian–Australian families suffered far more than they have ever dared to reveal until now.

She talks about her research among many Italian people who were interned and their families, which has now revealed a lot of suffering that was actually borne in silence. Many Italians did not complain. Most Italians who are here today or the descendants of the Italians who were interned, I am sure, did not complain, but many did suffer. In fact some died in the campsites. Her article continues —

The time is ripe for a full and sincere apology with appropriate compensation for the Italian families who lost so much in Australia during World War II. Canada and the USA have fully apologised to Japanese, German and Italian interned civilians with reparations.

The final paragraph states —

Australian Indigenous Peoples waited for 200 years for an apology. How long will interned Italian–Australians need to wait?

As we state, this is not a motion of apology; it is a motion of acknowledgement. But we should not consider that to be of any less value. I as an individual am sincerely sorry for what happened during the Second World War to Italians and other nationalities that may have been interned. I am sure the other members who have spoken today would probably agree with that expression. They are probably also sorry for what happened. We are saying that as individuals, not as an institution, a state government or a state Parliament. That may be for another day and another time, but I think it is quite clear that in the motion today we acknowledge that part of Australian history when many immigrants, particularly of Italian origin, were interned and injustice was inflicted upon them. An acknowledgement can be considered to be an appropriate form of reparations. An acknowledgement states what happened at a particular historical point of time, and it is part of what one calls truth telling. Truth telling is very important if we are to come to grips with our past. Our past has to acknowledge this period that this motion deals with.

By making this acknowledgement today and hopefully this motion being passed, we as a house will be showing our respect to the people who were interned and to the families that suffer. We will also be stating that we consider people who were interned and their families to be equal to all other citizens and other residents of Australia. We will also be saying that we are a civil society and a society of good manners, because civil people and people with good manners acknowledge when a wrong has been done. They do not hide it; they acknowledge it. They also bear truth to it and they tell what happened. They also express the suffering that happened. They are all part of a civil society. An acknowledgement comes down to an issue of mutual respect. It

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is respect between the society that put away these Italians and other so-called aliens and the society that was not put away. It is a mutual respect between the state and its citizens. When I say citizens, I am talking about these Italians, these British subjects or British citizens, but because they were Italians or of Italian background, they were interned.

Hon Carmen Lawrence in her speech in 1991 stated that she did not have to really go on about reconciliation, because Italians had already engaged in reconciliation through the success that had been experienced by many Italian immigrants in Australia. While she may be correct in part of that argument, I think today's motion that has been moved by the member for Warnbro and supported by the speakers before me and hopefully by this house, is a very strong act of reconciliation in which we seek to reconcile the injustice that took place in Australia during World War II and in this case in Western Australia. Our aim is to bring this issue to the wider community, because it is incredibly important that the wider community understands and knows what happened to the interns during World War II and does not have to do what I did, which was just by chance find out because I was doing a university assignment in the Harvey region. If anything, I very much hope today will be seen to be a very strong act of reconciliation and an act of a civil society and a civil house that shows our respect to those interns who are still with us today and their families. I commend the motion to the house.

**MR T.G. STEPHENS (Pilbara)** [5.41 pm]: I think I am the first member of the house without Italian heritage to rise to speak on this motion. I express my profound appreciation for my colleague the member for Warnbro for bringing this motion before the house, the members who have spoken on it already and the government for making it possible. I say to colleagues of Italian heritage and the wider Italian community of which they are part, how profoundly sorry I am for that chapter in Australian, particularly Western Australian, history and the impact it had at the time and the legacy it left. But out of a legacy like that is created the opportunity to celebrate the bonds and recognise the strengths that we have as a nation.

I have a particular reason for rising tonight; that is, to remind me and my colleagues that this is not just a story about people of Italian heritage, as important and large as that community is. What does the musical *Bran Nue Dae* have to do with a motion such as this? Well you might ask. *Bran Nue Dae* is written by a man who says there is nothing he would rather be than an Aborigine—Jimmy Chi. His father, the late Jimmy Chi Sr, was an old friend of mine who I first met when I was a young man in the Kimberley. Years before that, Jimmy Chi Sr—born in Broome, Australia to a Chinese father and Japanese mother—went to school with my father-in-law, lived and worked in a prosperous family in Broome that ran restaurants and taxi businesses and prospered as an Australian citizen of this state with great comfort and wealth. Then Japan bombed Broome and at that point hostilities towards the Japanese community escalated dramatically. An Australian-born son joined the other so-called enemy aliens and was taken, along with other Asiatic people, out of Broome. Many of these people, like Jimmy, had lived for many years in the Kimberley community and some were involved in the pearling industry, were Japanese born, but some were Australian-born residents and citizens who were effectively illegally classified as enemy aliens. They came and joined other so-called enemy aliens; they were put together with the Italian internees—people of Italian heritage, not only foreign born but also Australian born—and went from internment camp to internment camp and were shipped off to South Australia. Eventually after the war, Jimmy Chi Sr, as he told me in the early part of my career, came back to Broome in about 1947 to find that his family businesses had been destroyed—the shop was destroyed and the taxis burnt. He was left without any income and without any opportunity to look after himself. His family wealth had gone. Jimmy Chi Sr tried to get a job on the wharf in Broome, but such was the hostility of the times, such was the antipathy of the Western Australian community and the union workforce to someone of Japanese heritage—no matter that he was of Chinese–Japanese heritage, born in Australia; a citizen of Australia—he was unable to get a job. He went to the Labor member at the time to try to cajole the union movement into allowing him to work on the wharf. The old Labor MP at the time was bloke called Aubrey Cloverley and he eventually was able to persuade the Australian Workers' Union, which had coverage, to allow Jimmy Chi Sr to take employment. Over the years, Jimmy Chi Sr worked and struggled to build up some of the resources that made it possible for him to raise his family. Jimmy Chi Jr went on to have a short career at the university where he had a dreadful motor vehicle accident and then mental illness, but from that mental illness and the experience of his life came that wonderful musical *Bran Nue Dae*, which has now been immortalised in a movie. That heritage comes right out of these years of an Australian-born resident with Japanese and Chinese heritage suddenly finding himself classified as an enemy alien and interned.

Jimmy Chi Sr was not alone. Other peoples of Asian heritage, both Australian born and foreign born, found themselves in that same enemy alien category, and some were illegally interned and others legally interned. Nonetheless, they were interned and the community, as a result of those internments, has this opportunity to not only acknowledge but also express hopefully more than regret—a profound sorrow for what happened at that time and in the aftermath. In addition, of course, to the Italian and Japanese people, people from the German

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community were also interned. We have a small German population in Western Australia, it is larger in South Australia, clearly, but people of very longstanding German heritage found themselves in similar circumstances. There were small numbers in Western Australia, but amongst their number were the German missionaries who were the mainstay of the Kimberley Aboriginal apostolate of the Catholic Church who were effectively interned on the missions of the Kimberley for the duration of the war. They were not allowed to leave those missions at all; they were required to stay there under the supervision of Army officers who became their internment camp commanders. By and large, those arrangements worked and the German missionaries were able to continue with their apostolate and conduct their lives and their work with all the stress that must have come from this period.

Colleagues, in 1988 I had the extraordinary privilege of being in the United States Senate, by chance, to watch the final passage of a bill that was the act of recompense by the American peoples to the people of Japanese heritage who during the war had been illegally interned in the United States of America, especially those on the west coast of America. There were literally hundreds of thousands of people of Japanese heritage, American-born Japanese, who were illegally interned, humiliated and in many cases experienced the same loss of property and liberty and huge disadvantage as a result of scooping them up in the horror that war is. Eventually, the United States Congress passed legislation that was to gift to each of those Japanese internees illegally interned recompense either to themselves if they still survived or to their heirs. Today, after talking to the member for Warnbro, I searched online to see how that compensation played out. At that time, I seem to remember only a small amount of US dollars was spoken about in the Senate; I thought it was about \$US15 000, which seemed to me to be a token amount of compensation for the years of illegal internment of American citizens who happened to have Japanese ancestry. In the madness of war, law was ignored and these citizens were illegally interned. If I am to believe what I discovered in the online research that I carried out today, the compensation eventually paid out ran into billions of dollars; I could scarcely believe the figure I saw online.

In comparison, we are getting off mighty cheaply through a motion like this one, which does nothing more than acknowledge this injustice and does not carry with it, for a range of diplomatic and parliamentary reasons, all the things that perhaps it should. That is not the member for Warnbro's fault; it is simply the way these things are negotiated, and this motion is therefore only an acknowledgement of what happened. In my view, we should do more than just acknowledge what happened; we should apologise and perhaps explore, even at this stage, some more profound act of acknowledgement as a community. There is no way of getting around the fact that we illegally interned so many people including, in many cases, Australian-born citizens; I think they were referred to as British subjects at the time, but they were dealt with more like objects. The legacy of that was families stripped of parents and resources, and put through a great deal of stress and injustice; and that injustice continued beyond the war years. They experienced prejudice and humiliation during the war years and then, in the ensuing years, continued antipathy towards people from the countries of former wartime enemy combatants. We need to acknowledge that this was an injustice that cries out for remedy. Remedy can be a very simple thing, such as reconciliation through acknowledgement or an apology; but there are other forms of acknowledgement and recompense, including securing the historical memory of what we did during the war years to make sure that those injustices are never repeated.

I am very conscious that my colleague the Leader of the Opposition would like to speak, so in deference to him I am going to resume my seat.

**MR M. MCGOWAN (Rockingham — Leader of the Opposition)** [5.54 pm]: I stand to support this motion moved by the member for Warnbro, and I thank all members of the house for their support of it. I also acknowledge people in the public gallery who have come along tonight, including relatives of those who were interned and perhaps even some of the internees themselves, to be part of this proceeding.

Tonight's motion is about remembrance and acknowledgement. It is about remembering something that took place in our state for which our forebears were responsible, and acknowledging that it caused a great deal of pain and suffering to many, many of our citizens and their families. It is about realising that there needs to be some formal remembrance tonight for those people.

The events we are talking about occurred during the Second World War, which was 70-odd years ago now. Most people who were involved are now gone, but some are still with us and I hope that tonight provides some closure for them and some feeling that their suffering and pain is acknowledged by those of us in this Parliament today.

This is something that happened in many countries, and it is probably more commonly known amongst Western Australians that it happened in the United States to people of Japanese ancestry than that it happened here in Western Australia, particularly to people of Italian origin but also to people of other backgrounds. In the United States, of course, a great many Japanese Americans were interned in horrific conditions for the duration of the Second World War.

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It also took place in other states of Australia. I remember, some 13 years ago, going to the Barossa Valley, which is built upon many communities with a German history, after German migrants settled there in the nineteenth century to set up wineries and the like. During both the First and Second World Wars, many of those people were interned in South Australia. I remember seeing a plaque in one of the villages of the Barossa commemorating a gentleman who had been interned in South Australia during World War II. His son served in the Australian Army and fought the German forces, yet his father was interned because he had a Germanic-sounding name; he was actually Danish. This fellow spent four or five years in prison whilst his son served in the Australian Defence Forces, fighting the forces of Nazi Germany and putting his life in danger. I thought that it was incredibly unjust that that could possibly happen in this country, but of course, times were different then; governments perhaps were not as understanding as they are today. World events were dramatic, and governments and the general population held the view that the country was under great threat, so that extreme measures were required to deal with the events taking place internationally that could impact our country. I do not know whether those events were an excuse for what happened and I do not know whether those actions were justified, but I know that what happened was wrong, certainly with the hindsight of historical examination 70 years after the event.

I was recently in Dwellingup and saw the site of one of the old camps; I did not even know there was one near Dwellingup until I drove past a sign on the road to the former Italian internee camp in the bush. People were interned there for years, taken away from their families, and had to endure very primitive and difficult conditions through no fault of their own. They were ascribed the status of enemy when, indeed, they were not. Those assumptions no doubt caused a great deal of pain to patriotic, law-abiding, worthwhile Australian citizens or residents who only wanted to help their country. I am sure a lot of pain was visited on those people during that time.

What is uplifting about this story is that many of those families stayed in this country, despite the injustice committed against them, and many of them went on to achieve great things and held no grudge for what had taken place. That says something about the spirit of the people who were involved. One of the descendants of those people is the member for Warnbro, whose grandfather was interned in one of those camps, and who went on to serve in the defence forces himself, so some of these stories have an uplifting ending.

To all the people involved, I acknowledge what you went through. I thank those people who have come along tonight, and we can all pledge that it will not happen again.

**DR K.D. HAMES (Dawesville — Deputy Premier)** [6.00 pm]: The time is about to come when you leave, Mr Acting Speaker (Mr P.B. Watson), but I want to add my contribution to this motion. I have been going through the stories and histories on the internet of those who were interned in various states of Australia.

*Sitting suspended from 6.00 to 7.00 pm*

**Dr K.D. HAMES:** I am glad to be back on my feet, and I am pleased to see that I still have 20 minutes. I say well done to the Clerks, even though I managed to squeeze in a minute before the dinner break. I say thank you to those people in the Speaker's gallery for staying to hear other members speak. Many other people want to make contributions to this debate in recognition of the hardship that many of those people or their relatives suffered during internment.

I did not really know that this was such a big issue in Australia. I am a previous resident of Dianella. I lived there for many years—in fact, since the early 1960s. The Morley and Bayswater areas are filled with people of Italian descent. My wife is a Catholic, so my children went to a Catholic school. A large proportion of the children at the Infant Jesus School in Morley were Italian. I got onto the Bayswater council in 1985, I think, when John D'Orazio was the Mayor of Bayswater. I think about one-third of the councillors of the City of Bayswater were Italian. In fact, all our campaign team members were of Italian descent. There is no-one like people of Italian descent to support candidates in local government elections.

Interestingly enough, the subject of internment during the war was never a topic. It was not something that people raised. They did not say, "Yes, my family was in that situation." They did not discuss anyone they knew who had been in that situation. It has not been until tonight when this issue has been raised in the house that I have given it any thought. My bet is that a lot of people in that group I dealt with would have had family members who had been in the same situation. I do not know why people would not talk about it, but I would have to think that there were certainly some bad feelings because they or their family members had been locked away.

During my time at high school and university and in my medical career, I was in the Army Reserve and in the cadets. I think I did about 20 years in total. A significant component of that was spent at the Northam Army barracks. I did not even know that that was one of the first sites of internment of Italians, in particular, during World War II. I think there was another site at Harvey where many Italian residents were sent. I had a look on

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the net—the opportunities we have with an iPad are fantastic—to find out what happened and how many people were interned. During World War I, a lot of Italians and Germans were interned. These figures are for Australia. Interestingly enough, I could not find specific figures for Western Australia. When I searched for “internments in world war in Western Australia”, no matches were found. It was only when I searched for “internments in World War II” that there were matches largely for Australia, but they also included discussions about Western Australia and, in fact, there were a lot of discussions about the United States, where there were significant internments. There were about 7 000 people during World War II and about 7 000 people during World War I. They were people of all nationalities, not just of Italian descent. Of those people, 1 500 were what were called British nationals—that is, people who had, in effect, become citizens. At the peak, 12 000 people were interned in Western Australia. Interestingly, it goes on to say that at the end of World War I, virtually all those people were sent back to their country of origin. Even at the conclusion of the war, they were not allowed to stay in Western Australia, whereas before the end and after the end of World War II, a lot of people, other than the Japanese, were able to go back to their communities. Interestingly, most of the Japanese prisoners of war—I cannot say all of them, because the member for Pilbara has talked about one in particular who went back to Broome—were repatriated back to Japan. Even those who were born in Australia were sent back to Japan. It is interesting that this behaviour during both World War I and World War II is typical of those days. For those who have not read it, *The Power of One* is a fantastic book. It is about a German who had been living in South Africa for many years and who was interned in the local prison at the onset of World War II.

My involvement with the Italian community in the Morley–Dianella region has been a very long one. I have some fantastic friends in the area. In fact, if I decided to have a function and invite just the Italian people from that area, my bet is that 400 or 500 people from that area would come to that function. Those people are a collection of the most respected people within the community. We all remember those early years, not just following the war, but in the 1960s and 1970s, when people looked down somewhat on the Italians. It was not just the Italians; it was people of any ethnic origin. I remember members of the Greek community telling me that they were not even allowed to own property in the early years. In fact, they were on the side of the Allies during the war. In those days, members of the Italian community would take on all the hard jobs that no-one else would do—bricklaying, market gardening and all those tough jobs that a lot of Aussies did not want to do. A lot of British and European people did not want to take on those really tough jobs, but the Italian community would do that work. I can well imagine what a massive loss it would have been during those years of the war when those hardworking people of Italian descent were taken away from their families and communities. Their skills, personalities, food and all those fantastic things that Italian people bring to Western Australia were taken away from those communities. Since that time, attitudes have changed. To some extent, the Vietnamese people are the next lot of immigrants to have taken over a lot of those jobs that are not so desirable because they are hard yakka. The Italian community has blossomed in this state. We have so many members of Parliament, lawyers, doctors and people of every profession imaginable of Italian descent who make a fantastic contribution to society in Western Australia. It was interesting to look at the motions that have been moved about recognising that contribution, the sacrifices that were made, and in fact the hardship that was created for those communities. Hon John Panizza, a Liberal senator, obviously of Italian origin, moved a motion along these lines back in the 1990s. My notes say that he did not get a lot of support. They do not say anything more than that but obviously people at that time were not supportive of that sort of motion. However, more recently in South Australia last year a motion was put forward, by a Labor Party member in that case, with bipartisan support and passed in the South Australian Parliament.

We have had lots of apologies in this house on lots of issues; apologies to the Indigenous community; to those who were interned; to the orphans who came here from overseas; to the stolen generation; and to women who had their children taken away through the adoption process. We have had lots of apologies around issues like that, but never in this Parliament an apology to those people who were taken away during the Second World War. I heard with interest that Hon Carmen Lawrence did bring up this issue as a debating point, I believe, during a dinner in the other chamber.

Well done to the member for Warnbro for bringing this motion into Parliament. The member’s brother and I have known each other for a long time. His brother and my brother were best mates and went overseas together. They come from Burekup where my family were living. In fact my brother married a Burekup girl who was the member’s next-door neighbour. That whole region has a very strong Italian community, as does most of Western Australia. It is therefore a great credit to the member for Warnbro for bringing this motion before the house. I want to say from my personal point of view that I strongly support the motion before the house, which recognises the hardships and the tragedy in those days of people who just, through the circumstance of war, were taken away from their friends, from their families, from their society, from their livelihood and from their income and put into what was, in effect, a concentration camp. Whatever else we might like to call it, that is in effect what it was. I therefore think it is critically important that this Parliament recognises those people who were affected;

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that we apologise for what happened, and that we then move on together. One thing I found about people of Italian descent is that when you become a brother in arms, as I think I have been with the Italian community in Morley and Dianella, there is nothing that they will not do for you and nothing that you cannot do together in friendship and harmony.

It is one of the great things of my life that I have been in such close communication with the Italian community. In fact I have been with John D’Orazio and his friends on a fishing trip. We used to go to the Abrolhos every year to go fishing with John D’Orazio and the team. I could name all of the Italian guys. The Prestianos, the Gangemis and a whole lot of us would play cards. There is some silly game called “uno, duo, tres, quatro”. It is like a toss-up thing that we do. Charlie Fazio and John D’Orazio would be out on the boat first thing in the morning yelling out at the top of their lungs this game that they used to play. I used to be pretty good at briscola. We would have our briscola teams away on the island playing together. I have to say that was a great experience in my life and I still regard all those guys as really good friends and supporters. One thing I can say I will do now is go back and talk to them and ask them whether their families were taken away and whether they were involved, and get them to tell me some of those stories. I believe it is something that needs to be out in the open, needs to be discussed and needs to be part of our everyday life so that we can put those things out in the open, put them behind us and then move forward.

Madam Acting Speaker (Ms A.R. Mitchell), thank you for the time to express those views in this house.

**MR M.W. SUTHERLAND (Mount Lawley — Deputy Speaker)** [7.14 pm]: I also rise to say a few words. I was actually helped to settle in Perth by one of the Italian people from Western Australia who was interned on Rottnest Island but, fortunately, for only three weeks. I should acknowledge my friends Mr Terranova, and Councillor Sonia Turkington from Bayswater who I have spoken with about this matter in passing when having coffee with her. I am glad to see her in the gallery here today.

My story is that my neighbour in Johannesburg married a girl from Mullewa who is Italian with the surname Pirrottina, and that is why I landed up in Perth. In fact Sam Pirrottina said to me when I came on holiday once, “If ever you come to Perth, you can come and stay in my flat in Mt Lawley until you get settled”. That is how I landed up in Mt Lawley and I suppose that is how I landed up in this house here tonight. I have been very close to the family and I was talking to Sam. I asked, “Sam, how did you land up in Australia?” He told me the story that he was on one of the last boats that left Italy prior to the Italians declaring war. He arrived here, and he had two brothers, I think, already in Geraldton and Mullewa who were tomato growers. No sooner had he arrived than he was arrested and sent by train to Perth and from Perth to Rottnest. He was interned on Rottnest for about three weeks and some farmer in Geraldton or the surrounds there swore to his family’s good standing and, fortunately, he was released and was able to go back there and work.

I have also, like the Deputy Premier, looked at the internet. I saw that in the 1933 census there were approximately 26 700 people who had been born in Italy, and out of that 26 700, 4 700 were interned. The argument used in Queensland for internment was that when the Japanese came into the war perhaps the Italians would join up with the Japanese. One story on the internet was about a local Australian Labor Party councillor in north Queensland who was arrested because he was actually agitating for better wages for the Italian workers in the cane fields! Again, I suppose, in Western Australia there was a feeling that perhaps some fascist people had infiltrated social clubs and whatnot and were stoking things up. But the story that I know from my friend is that decisions were very arbitrary. People could be arrested or not arrested depending on who they knew. I asked him, “How come you were arrested in Geraldton and your brothers were left alone?” He said to me, “There was a person of Italian descent who was actually in the military up there and if he just took a dislike to you or he wanted to get you out of the way, he’d dob you in and have you arrested and they would take you off and have you interned.”

I was listening to ABC radio about a week ago when a lady was talking about her grandmother’s experience. Of course it was exactly what we have heard here tonight. A car would arrive at the farmhouse and take the husband away and leave the lady to care for the children and work the farm. These people actually matured by having to drive tractors and deal with the business side of the farm to make sure that the farm and the family continued. As we all know, some people were released from internment in the short term and were able to get back to their families and perhaps continue something of a semi-normal life after having gone through a traumatic experience. Others were not as lucky and were interned for a long time, which would have been even more traumatic for them and their families.

It is very difficult for us to look at history. We are sitting in 2012 and we are passing judgement on things that happened in the 1940s. The world is a changed place. I think that a lot of people suffered trauma, and I can imagine when people are creating a life for themselves that they are not particularly interested in politics. Members have given examples of people who came to Australia in the early years of the twentieth century, yet

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they were arrested and taken away when the war started. It is a vexed question, and the Deputy Premier has come up with a good point. We do not hear these stories very often. I was fortunate to have bumped into someone who helped me in establishing myself in Australia, and he and his family went through this. It is good that it has come out tonight and that all the people who have come along have heard the stories and sympathies that have been extended by members on both sides of the house and I look forward to discussing this further with Sonia, who is an expert on this matter.

**MR R.F. JOHNSON (Hillarys — Leader of the House)** [7.22 pm]: I want to say just a few words. Some people might wonder why this migrant Australian who comes from England wants to talk about Italian people. I have a wonderful affinity with Italian people. Some of my best friends in the whole world are Italian. I have three Italian grandchildren; their names are Antonio, Lorenzo and Sofia. How can they be anything other than Italian? They are the most beautiful grandchildren that anybody has ever wished for.

Since I came to Australia 25 years ago, some of the first people who welcomed me into their hearts and their homes were Italian people. They were Italian Australians, and I am sure our guests in the Speaker's gallery would know the names of some of them. A very, very dear friend of my family is a lady and her husband, Nancy and John Lunder. That is not an Italian name, but Nancy used to be Nancy Crisaffuli of Wanneroo; and, of course, Ned Crisaffuli was one of the pioneers of Wanneroo. Some people might remember him from the petrol station there; he had the indoor-outdoor cinema, where, if it was not raining, we could watch the films outside in the deck chairs but if the rain came down then we quickly moved inside and watched the rest of the film in the barn. He used to travel around WA with his projector back in the 1930s, 1940s and 1950s and show the latest movies. I have to say they never really talked about their relatives—parents, uncles and other family members—being interned during the war. I think it was something they probably did not want to talk about. They wanted to talk about what they were doing at the moment. Unfortunately, some of those wonderful people have passed away.

Many people come to this country as migrants, and they can feel a bit alone coming from the other side of the world. Certainly, when my wife and our family came here it was very interesting to see what people did to welcome us coming from another country. When people go to some countries, they are not welcomed; but in Western Australia we were welcomed. When my family members have come to Australia—there are not so many left in England now—they have travelled around the whole of Australia starting off in Perth, up to the northern parts of Western Australia, to Darwin and then over to Queensland, Sydney, Melbourne and back around South Australia. They did not all make it to Tasmania, but they said the friendliest people they ever came across were the people from WA. It is funny because a lot of them said that it was the Italian WA people who were the friendliest, and I had to agree with them. As I said, I have been very lucky. Some people say I am an honorary Italian. It is a nickname that I wear with great pride, because I get invited to many of the Italian functions. I see some of the guests in the gallery very often at the Italian functions. I even have an Italian media adviser, who writes all my Italian speeches and makes sure I get the pronunciation right. I have used those speeches on different occasions, at Christmas and various other occasions. I have some wonderful Italian friends and I know some people in the gallery will know some of them—Enzo and Serena Serna, who have been friends of mine for the last 20 years at least; and Vince Scurria and his family.

**Dr K.D. Hames** interjected.

**Mr R.F. JOHNSON:** The Deputy Premier is not Italian but he is a friend of mine!

Enzo is a very well known person, as the Deputy Premier would know; as is Vince Scurria and Carmelo Genovese and all of their families. Carl and Vince Alessandrino and their families are lovely people as well. I have gained so many Italian friends. I have to tell members that I find that very heart-warming. It is not only that I have three Italian grandchildren, but I just love Italian people. I think Italian people are hot blooded; they are very kind hearted and very warm people and they seem to be very generous and kind to me. I suppose if we find people with a warm heart and with a passion and they are very friendly, kind and loving to us, we cannot help but reciprocate that. As I say, it is not just in Western Australia where I have achieved the goal of having so many Italian friends. I actually had a lot of Italian friends in England before I came here. I was in the coffee business in my profession as a coffee taster and blender and I used to supply a lot of restaurants and hotels with coffee. Of course, many of the coffee houses, restaurants, hotels and those sorts of places were owned by Italian people in and around London and throughout the whole of the UK, so I gained wonderful friendships with them. They were very loyal people and because I managed to supply them with a good coffee that made good coffee for Italian people, they would buy it from me every week. They would always screw me down to a good price, I will tell members, but that is being a good business person. They were very loyal people, and over the years I probably sold many thousands of tonnes of coffee to my dear Italian friends in England. I was very sorry to say goodbye, ciao addio. I would travel around very often and I would see them week after week. I watched their families grow up. I watched the little babies grow into schoolchildren and young adults, and I have even been to

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their weddings. That is the sort of warmth that Italian people give to their friends. If you are a friend of an Italian family, you are a friend for life normally and they really do treat you with not only respect but a great deal of love and affection. I learnt little bits of Italian over the years and because I would see them week after week one expression that I often used was *ci vediamo la prossima settimana*—I will see you next week. I managed to get the pronunciation right, and I take pride in getting the pronunciation right because we should if we are going to try to speak another language. I love Italian as I love Spanish and French, and I did learn all those languages in England. Italian is, I think, a very beautiful language to learn. It is the language of love and the language of a wonderful group of people.

The motion before the house today is not one of saying sorry. It is not one in which the house says sorry for all the stress and things that happened to the Italian people who were interned. It says that it recognises and acknowledges that many of those people and their families were extremely disadvantaged. We can only agree with the fact that those people were interned in very hard times. We can have nothing but sympathy for those people at that time, who may have lost their father or brother who might have been interned for reasons that none of us would have felt were justified today. But unfortunately it happened at the time.

Back in England where I was born, I was a Blitz baby; I was born during the bombing of London. I remember that just after the war there were still some camps not far from where I lived where there were some Italian people. I suppose they were interned, and some may have been prisoners of war at the time. But they always got on very well with the local people. They would make things for all the children—for me and my brothers and all the local children. Then all the kids would take food and things to try to do some swaps with them. There was never any nastiness or animosity, I do not think, in that area at all. Italians have always been very hardworking people. They were hardworking then and they are still hardworking.

I have seen many people who have come to this country—a country of wonderful opportunities. I think the classic example is Italian people, in particular. I try not to say those sorts of things when I give a speech at an Italian function, because I sometimes think it sounds a bit patronising. Italians know their history. They know how hard they have worked here; they know how well they have done; they know how they are respected in this country and in this state of Western Australia by everybody. I know that in the early days they were called different names. It was the same with people who came from England; they were called some unpleasant names sometimes. But we have got over all that and I think that we are now living in a state—particularly if people live in the metropolitan area—in which people acknowledge that we are all culturally diverse, but we are basically all as one, and we all work together. We see marriages between Italian people and English people, as I have seen, or Polish people—whatever they may be. The important thing is that people have the basic love and understanding of their families. Something that I have always admired is the importance of the family in the Italian community. I think the family is *Ottimo! Perfetto!*—it is the best you can possibly have. I have always acknowledged that if people want to see how a family should live, love, play and work, they should just look at an Italian family because they will see the respect that the younger people have for their parents and their grandparents—nonno and nonna. They are very highly respected, far more than in many other areas. I know that the wife of my good friend the Minister for Agriculture and Food is Italian, and I have had many a —

**Mr D.T. Redman:** She's not Italian; she's from Sicily!

**Mr R.F. JOHNSON:** Almost Italian! She is a lovely lady, and I have had some very good conversations with her.

I am delighted and very, very honoured to be able to make a very small contribution tonight on this general motion. This is not a debate because members are not arguing against one another. This is something that is quite unique in this Parliament. For the rest of the day, ladies and gentlemen, we will be arguing across the chamber, but for nearly the last two hours we have been speaking, I think, as one, because we genuinely all have a feeling of love, respect and acknowledgement of the injustices and the harsh way in which people were dealt with, particularly the forebears of the member for Warnbro, during the times when we had war. Please God we will never have another war in which anything like that would ever have to take place again. I think we all pray that that would not happen. I think that we can look forward, particularly in Western Australia, to a wonderful future, not only for the wonderful Italian people, but for everybody, no matter what country they come from.

**MR B.S. WYATT (Victoria Park)** [7.33 pm]: I, too, rise to speak to the motion moved by the member for Warnbro, and I do have a confession to make: I am not Italian. Most of the speakers tonight are Italian; I am not. But I do have a conflict that requires me to speak tonight; that is, like the member for Blackwood–Stirling, I married into a Fremantle Italian family. My father-in-law is from Sicily and my mother-in-law is from Naples, actually. I am very fortunate to have married into that family. I am also a keen follower of Western Australian history. A lot of members have made the point tonight about the internment of Italian people. As the member for Pilbara pointed out in his story about Jimmy Chi Sr, it was not just Italian people who were impacted. Certainly,

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when the Japanese bombed Broome and Darwin, the impact that it had on people of Japanese and Chinese origin or descent was quite extraordinary.

I want to acknowledge and speak to, if I can, the 10 parts of the motion. I will focus on one for a minute, and that is the motion that the house —

believes that most people were primarily interned in the camps on the basis of their cultural heritage or the mistaken belief that it posed an unreasonable risk, and not for any demonstrated or validated criminal or security concerns;

I cannot for a moment imagine the hardship that Australians went through between the First and Second World Wars, during that Second World War period and immediately thereafter. Being born in 1974, I was brought up in extremely fortunate times, both economically and in terms of war. But it is always interesting to look back in the context of the way in which we have changed as a nation. In my hand is a book that I have quoted from extensively today, and I will continue to quote from it. This book is *A concise history of Western Australia* by Russell Earls Davis. Page 206 states —

The Federal Government was granted responsibility for immigration policy under the Commonwealth Constitution. As one of its first pieces of legislation, the newly established Australian parliament passed the Immigration Restriction Act of 1901 by which immigration was restricted to the British and other Europeans who could be expected to fit in to the Commonwealth's British society. The attempt to keep Australia predominantly British became known as the 'White Australia' Policy. The policy was maintained until the end of the Second World War. John Curtin expressed the hopes of many Australians when he said, faced by the threat of a Japanese invasion, 'This country shall remain forever the home of the descendants of those people who came here in peace in order to establish in the South Seas an outpost of the British race.'

The book goes on to outline the history of immigration in Western Australia post the Second World War, with the influx of large numbers of people from Italy, Greece and Yugoslavia, and how that fundamentally changed, obviously, the White Australia policy and then, more broadly, the make-up of our own community.

My father-in-law, Salvatore, came out from Sicily not long after his military service. He was a very young man, straight off the boat with nothing other than his bag. Ultimately he moved out to the goldfields and met Amalia, his now wife—she has been his wife for quite some time—my mother-in-law. They have lived in Fremantle for some 60 years. Neither of them was interned. However, interestingly, as the Minister for Police has pointed out, the Italian community is large and close. So whether it is Italian weddings or funerals, they are large celebrations by and large. You meet a lot of different Italians with different experiences. The story of those who were interned is indeed an extraordinary one. They were interned during a time when Australia was still bound, if you like, by the White Australia policy. The fallout that that had in respect of race relations meant that people who were not of British origin were treated intolerably. My mother-in-law tells me stories of growing up in the goldfields and some of the terrible racism that was inflicted on her as she grew up in Coolgardie, before she moved back to Fremantle. Certainly, as the member for Armadale has already pointed out, truth-telling is important for Parliaments. It is important to acknowledge that since settlement in 1829 our state has gone through many different forms and guises before getting to where we are now. The stories told from different parts of the community, I think, are important to acknowledge and to bring out, particularly those that perhaps are not as savoury as we would like to remember. I think during the time national security was used, as the member for Warnbro pointed out in the motion, a way of enforcing what clearly perhaps were not security risks, but cultural suspicions, was to intern people. It was simply a different time but a period we need to acknowledge and discuss. I hope the motion tonight—I note the member for Pilbara's reference to the United States Senate—acknowledges to those members of the Italian community, some of whom are here tonight, that we all acknowledge that it was an unacceptable and terribly unfortunate chapter in Western Australia's history. I was surprised to hear the member for Armadale say there were, I think, some 36 Italian members of Parliament.

**Dr A.D. Buti:** From my understanding there were 39.

**Mr B.S. WYATT:** I am surprised the number was so small. I thought the number across Australia would have been larger than 39. I do not doubt the member's word, but based on our own Parliament, I would have thought the numbers across the nation were much higher than that.

**Mr J.J.M. Bowler:** They have been too busy making real money!

**Mr B.S. WYATT:** That may indeed be the case. Certainly my mother-in-law likes to point out on a regular basis that I am not providing well enough for her daughter and perhaps should consider other ways to ensure that I can provide the life to which my mother-in-law would like her daughter to become accustomed! One thing, as has been said, is that Italian families are extraordinarily straight-talking. Indeed, my mother-in-law never misses a

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moment to let me know exactly what she is thinking about me, my inadequacy as a husband, a politician and a member of the opposition!

I think many members have pointed out already that the impact the Italian community has had on Western Australia has been beyond measure—extraordinary. To have treated members of the Italian community so appallingly during the Second World War was a shameful episode. I am delighted to be able to make a small contribution tonight in support of this outstanding motion. I commend the members for Warnbro, West Swan and Armadale and all other members tonight for what has been a good and timely debate.

**MR P. ABETZ (Southern River)** [7.42 pm]: In rising to make a small contribution to this discussion—I do not think it should be called a debate—I guess I am always a little wary of passing judgement on the actions of past generations because we sit in the comfort of our freedom and our security. I hesitate to participate in that discussion and pass judgement on early generations. But I do not think that is the purpose of the motion. Today, we possibly do not really understand the pressures the previous generation felt they were under when they were making decisions during the war. Little can we understand today the fears that motivated them with Australia at war and the war going badly in Europe and the Asia–Pacific region. We today will never really be able to understand the fears of many ordinary Australians for the future of their country and their freedom.

Tonight, I would like to make a little contribution to the discussion from the perspective of the Germans who were interned during World War II. In doing so, I am indebted to Klaus Neumann, who gave the National Archives of Australia Frederick Watson Fellowship lecture in 2002. I believe that history is a vitally important subject because, as a nation, we must face our history just as much as a family or any individual must face their history. Indeed, the more skeletons a family has hidden in the closet, the more dysfunctional the family tends to be. Likewise, as a nation, we need to face the so-called skeletons in the cupboard, get them out and face reality. It is really important that we face our history, not some embellishment of our history to make us feel better about ourselves; we need to face our real history and avoid the danger of trying to rewrite our history for ideological purposes because, as the Yiddish proverb goes, a half-truth is a whole lie. Without a true working knowledge of our history we struggle to understand our identity because our history, whether we like it or not, in many ways influences us today. Our histories as families and as a nation in part shape us and, hopefully, we learn from history, although as one philosopher put it, history teaches us that it teaches us nothing. I hope that is wrong in this case.

Indeed, it seems that the Australian authorities and governments learnt from the indiscriminate internment of aliens during World War I. I will quote from Klaus Neumann’s paper —

During World War II, Germans were interned selectively. Despite intense public pressure to intern all enemy aliens, the Menzies and Curtin governments acted with circumspection and tried to avoid a repeat of the mass internments that had taken place during World War I. In March 1942, Prime Minister Curtin declared in Parliament that ‘the Government does not believe in taking people en bloc and throwing them into internment camps’. The government’s rationale for internment was seemingly straightforward. A memorandum prepared by the Department of the Army in July 1940 stated:

Internment of enemy aliens and others is in effect a precautionary measure designed to protect the national interests ... This is not intended to be a definite reflection on their avowed loyalty and disposition towards the country, but military considerations take precedence over all others. Action is thus necessarily taken on reasonable grounds which give rise to definite suspicion; the general policy being that the nation should always be given the benefit of the doubt.

The reality was that the Australian authorities and the public seemed to be very concerned about sabotage and espionage, particularly from the German migrants who had come to Australia in the 1930s. They were under suspicion of having come as sort of forerunners to the war that was happening at that time. Tragically, many of those who came—roughly 10 000 German-speaking people—came to Australia as prisoners of war. Also a large number of Jewish refugees who had fled Germany in the 1930s managed to come to Australia in the late 1930s. Once the war broke out, they were treated as Germans and were therefore under suspicion, even though they were the very people who had fled the fear of Nazi persecution in the early years, and then the very real Nazi persecution when the holocaust got underway. In many ways, the Jewish–German refugees—I think “refugee” is an appropriate term for them—were treated in a way that was very inappropriate, to put it politely. It is estimated that during the second half of the 1930s some 10 000 people successfully sought refuge in Australia and then, of course, there is also the Dunera boys’ story. A movie was made about that. I will not go into that, but many people were interned who had actually fled Nazi Germany. Many of the Jewish people in particular who had fled Germany and managed to get to Australia had their German citizenship revoked because they had Jewish

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grandparents. To then have found themselves in Australia being treated with suspicion must have been incredibly painful for these people.

The other thing I found interesting, in doing a bit of homework on this, was that there was actually an Aliens Tribunal to which people could go to appeal their internment. The sad situation that arose was that many people were interned because somebody had informed the authorities about something or had made up a story. Often it was a jealousy issue, because if someone had done well, a competitor in business could do them in and say bad things about them, and they would be interned. The other problem was that even if the tribunal ruled that the person should be released, the Department of Army could overrule that. As a result, many, many people were not allowed freedom when they should have been entitled to that.

I want to leave a few moments for the member for Mandurah, but I must say that one of the things that intrigued me in doing some research is that it appears that there were some apologies or similar things in the past; however, I have not been able to locate them. One of the things that we should all, I guess, learn from what has happened here in history is that the so-called precautionary principle was used—that is, if there was any doubt whatsoever in some bureaucrat's mind about whether a person was a potential risk, that person was interned. When we read some of the individual stories, they are pretty gut-wrenching, and the trauma and pain that many people suffered was certainly uncalled for and totally inappropriate. One of the things that many of the German internees found particularly offensive was the fact that they were locked up with Nazi sympathisers and Nazi supporters. The other interesting thing I came across was that some people wanted to be interned because as German people they could not get a job, and there were no unemployment benefits for them, so by being interned they knew that they would be looked after during the war. So some people were thankful that they had been interned, which is quite an interesting scenario. That is my little contribution to the debate. I believe that we need to learn from our history so that we do not repeat it.

**MR D.A. TEMPLEMAN (Mandurah)** [7.53 pm]: Madam Acting Speaker (Ms A.R. Mitchell), I draw your attention to the state of the house. I would like to have a quorum for the vote.

[Quorum formed.]

**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN:** Very briefly, it is important that we put this motion to the house this evening, because this is a significant motion that this house has been discussing tonight. I want to acknowledge the people who are in the Speaker's gallery this evening. Thank you for being here for what is a very important discussion by this Parliament and acknowledgment by this Parliament. As you have heard throughout the last few hours, the members of this Parliament are acknowledging, through the motion that has been put by the member for Warnbro, what occurred many, many years ago and the significance of that. It is important that this Parliament acknowledges such events in our history, and it is important that we in this place are part of that acknowledgement. So I want to salute the people in the gallery who have been present for the discussion tonight. I also want to highlight and congratulate the member for Warnbro for bringing to this Parliament of Western Australia such an important acknowledgment. As the Deputy Premier said earlier, this Parliament has made a number of apologies and acknowledgements in the past. But this is a very significant and important one, and certainly I, along with all the members of this place, are proud to be able to make that acknowledgment, particularly with the people who are present in the gallery this evening. I know that the member for Warnbro now wishes to close the debate. But I will say, for the benefit of the people in the gallery, that we will not be dividing on this motion, but we will be asked to support the motion with an aye. I am sure you will note that there will be a unanimous vote of approval for this motion.

**MR P. PAPALIA (Warnbro)** [7.56 pm] — in reply: I want to respond very briefly to the contributions this evening and note that all of the contributions to this debate were heartfelt, positive and supportive, and I am sure that was particularly appreciated by the members of families of internees who are present this evening and the descendants of internees. I particularly want to acknowledge the member for West Swan and the member for Armadale, who joined me in moving this motion, and also the member for Swan Hills, who made a very heartfelt contribution on behalf of the member for Bunbury, who could not be here this evening.

Like the Deputy Premier, I also want to take a moment to acknowledge that we are following in the footsteps of others who have attempted to acknowledge this injustice. The first person to do so was Senator Panizza in 1991 in the federal Parliament. I was not aware that he did not garner much support for his motion, but I would not be surprised, because it was a different era. From what we can gather, there was not enough support, or perhaps enough comfort, within this Parliament at that time to even move a motion on the floor of this Parliament. So it is worthy to acknowledge that we are following in Senator Panizza's footsteps, and also to acknowledge that this house did have a reconciliation dinner in 1991. But it is well beyond time that we moved a motion in this house, and it was wonderful to hear the contributions from around the Parliament.

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I would finally like to acknowledge the people in the Speaker's gallery. Thank you. As I said upstairs earlier tonight, your presence here this evening empowers this motion and gives it real meaning. It gives us a direct connection to those who are not here and who suffered so much during the Second World War. We very much appreciate you, at very short notice in many cases, making the effort and contributing to this motion this evening. I thank you very much and commend the motion to the house.

Question put and passed.

[Applause.]

*Unanimous Vote — Point of Order*

**Mr J.C. KOBELKE:** Madam Acting Speaker, that was obviously a very important motion, which had support from both sides. I am not sure whether there is some way of recording in the actual proceedings of the house that the motion was passed unanimously or without any dissent. I am not sure whether there is some way that that might be recorded in *Hansard*, to actually show respect for the debate and the strong support it received from all members of the house.

**Mrs L.M. Harvey:** Well done, member for Balcatta.

**The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms A.R. Mitchell):** Member for Balcatta, my advice is that we do not have a particular mechanism to record votes individually, but it has been recorded in *Hansard* that no vote against the motion was raised. So I think we can demonstrate that. Thank you.

*Orders of the Day — Point of Order*

**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN:** My point of order regards orders of the day. I am seeking clarification. I know that the Leader of the House is not here, but perhaps the acting Leader of the House may be able to inform me. I am very confused at this moment—very confused. I will need speakers in this place for particular bills tonight. I am seeking, perhaps through interjection, or through the acting Leader of the House's support —

**Mr A.J. Simpson:** No. 10.

**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN:** I cannot quite hear the member for Darling Range yet, but I am seeking which order of the day we might move on to so that I might be able to alert the lead speaker of the opposition about that particular item.

**Mr A.J. SIMPSON:** The member for Mandurah made a point of order. My understanding is that we are going on to order of the day 10.