

JEWISH COMMUNITY — RACIAL VILIFICATION

Statement

HON KATE DOUST (South Metropolitan) [5.20 pm]: On 27 April, I attended the Jewish community’s Holocaust commemoration, Yom HaShoah. This is an event that I have attended for many years. As members will be aware, the event acknowledges the six million Jews who were murdered by the Nazis during World War II. I was accompanied by Bill Johnston, MLA, Simon Millman, MLA, Hon Tjorn Sibma and many other members of Parliament and members of the Jewish community. It is a very solemn, moving and very sad event, especially when a survivor or a member of the family of a survivor recounts their experiences during this horrific period in our history. In my view, it remains important to continually remind ourselves to do everything possible to avoid repeating that period of history. One would hope that we would never have to deal with these sorts of atrocities again, but sadly, we saw from afar the travesty and wastage of war in Ukraine, and the brutal massacre of innocent Ukrainians. When we say “lest we forget”, obviously some have.

That brings me to what I want to bring to members’ attention tonight. We are seeing around the world, and in Australia, an increase in racism and anti-Semitism, with acts of violence, intimidation and, in some cases, murder. We have seen the rise of far-right groups in our country, which use symbols of hate to cause distress and fear amongst communities that have already seen the diabolical outcomes, from similar beginnings, of this type of activity, and have suffered as a result.

I note that recently the Victorian government, on 11 May, announced the introduction of a bill to ban the use of the Nazi swastika in public, the Summary Offences Amendment Act (Nazi Symbol Protection) Bill 2022. It is expected that this bill will receive bipartisan support. When it is passed, it will enable police to confiscate Nazi symbols, such as swastikas, if they are displayed in public. There will be fines of up to \$22 000 or 12 months’ jail if the law is breached. Both New South Wales and Queensland are also in the process of introducing similar legislation soon. New South Wales currently has a draft bill out for consultation.

I have recently engaged with members of our local Jewish community and the vice president of the Jewish Community Council of Western Australia, Mr Steve Lieblich, to gauge their views on the local need for legislation of this nature. Their response was that although this is not currently an issue here to the same extent as it is in other states, there has been an increase in the usage of the Nazi swastika in public; flying the Nazi flag; the use of Nazi symbols in graffiti; the sale of Nazi memorabilia; and an increase in hostile actions against members of the Jewish community in schools, homes and retail outlets.

Today I have written to the Premier, the Attorney General, the Minister for Police, and the Minister for Citizenship and Multicultural Interests to ask the government to consider introducing legislation in the same vein to ban the public use of the Nazi swastika. I have sought advice from the Jewish community and support from the member for Mount Lawley, Mr Simon Millman. This legislation would send a clear message that anti-Semitic activities are unacceptable and not to be tolerated in our Western Australian community. I will note however, that the swastika is sometimes used by some religions, and culturally, in other countries, and that there is no request from the community in Western Australia to ban it if it is used for those purposes. The ban on the Nazi swastika would boost a sense of security and safety for members of our Jewish community. A number of other countries have already banned the use of Nazi symbols: Germany, France, Latvia, Poland and a range of others, who have had that real-life experience during World War II and do not want to see it repeated.

The Jewish Community Council of Western Australia is of the view that the banning of the public display of hate symbols such as the Nazi swastika will aid in countering racism, although it is not a silver bullet. I know that all members of this Parliament find anti-Semitism abhorrent. I hope that if the Premier and the Labor government can see their way to introduce legislation to ban the public display of the Nazi swastika, it would indeed receive bipartisan support across these chambers and have a swift passage through this place.

Statement

HON TJORN SIBMA (North Metropolitan) [5.25 pm]: Very briefly, I thought that was an outstanding contribution by Hon Kate Doust. If the government was moved to introduce the sort of legislation that is envisioned, absolutely we would support it.