

FORCED ADOPTIONS MEMORIAL — TOWN OF VICTORIA PARK

Statement by Minister for Culture and the Arts

MR D.A. TEMPLEMAN (Mandurah — Minister for Culture and the Arts) [9.04 am]: I would like to inform the house of a recent event I was honoured to be invited to—the unveiling of an important memorial that recognises the apologies of state and federal governments for the forced adoption of children. The memorial consists of two sculptures, titled “Empty Arms—Broken Lives”, and was commissioned by the Association Representing Mothers Separated from their Children by Adoption, known as ARMS. It was unveiled in the Town of Victoria Park on Thursday, 21 March 2019, to mark the sixth anniversary of the national apology offered by then Prime Minister Julia Gillard on behalf of the Australian government on 21 March 2013. On 19 October 2010, Western Australia became the first state in Australia to apologise to mothers who had been subjected to forced adoption. The Western Australian Parliament apologised to the mothers, their children and families who were adversely affected by these past adoption practices. In fact, the Western Australian Parliament was the first in the world to offer an apology for past forced adoption practices and was supported by both sides of the house. The apology was heard by a large number of those mothers and families in the public gallery. Acknowledging and validating the trauma was a critical step in the healing process, and it enabled some closure.

These sculptures are a symbolic acknowledgement of the pain and trauma suffered by all people separated by forced adoption. The unveiling of this memorial marks an important milestone for those people whose lives were impacted by these past practices and policies. ARMS donated the sculptures to the Town of Victoria Park, which has embraced their significance and found a home for them in Read Park, reflecting the inclusive and caring approach of the Victoria Park community. I would particularly like to acknowledge the work of Mayor Trevor Vaughan, Anthony Vuleta, CEO, and the entire team at the Town of Victoria Park for their support and assistance in adopting this important memorial. I would also like to acknowledge the hard work of ARMS coordinator Lynne Devine in making this memorial a reality, and to Sue MacDonald, my constituent, for first introducing me to this history by sharing her story. These sculptures are a poignant reminder and acknowledgement of a deeply traumatic and sad time in our history. It is hoped that the memorial will provide a place for quiet reflection.