

**MARIJA KAROVSKA — FATALITY
FREMANTLE WAR MEMORIAL — DESECRATION**

Statement

HON CHARLES SMITH (East Metropolitan) [6.21 pm]: I would like to raise two issues briefly this evening, as I am aware that many frontbench members want to get back to their country estates! I will just be brief. I would like to take this opportunity —

Several members interjected.

Hon CHARLES SMITH: Listen, this is important.

I would like to take this opportunity to express my condolences in this house to the family of a Mrs Marija Karovska, who was killed during an alleged carjacking in Mirrabooka in February this year. The 51-year-old mother was allegedly run down in her own driveway during an attempted car theft at the family home. The tragic and callous loss of the life of Mrs Karovska has left the local Macedonian–Australian and north eastern suburbs communities reeling. I was deeply shocked and angered by the incident and I truly hope that justice will be done in the court system. The penalty for murdering an innocent person should be harsh and resolute, with no soft-touch approaches involving bail or cutting deals for short sentences. I believe the overwhelming majority of Western Australians would agree with me when I say there should be no more excessive leniency in sentencing for such serious crimes.

The reality is that many people in the community are alarmed about these instances and about the seeming prevalence of crime and violence in Perth. The latest statistics show that there is indeed a serious crime issue in our city. My electorate contains a number of crime hotspots. When I talk to constituents throughout the East Metropolitan Region, law and order and antisocial behaviour are often among their main concerns. Enough is enough. We want our safe Perth back.

The second issue I will raise is that recently in the news there was footage of a man throwing a bucket of his own faeces over a war memorial in Fremantle. What is the penalty for a premeditated defacement of something as sacred to the Australian people as a war memorial? There is nothing in the Criminal Code. We have only the Graffiti Vandalism Act. The act imposes a maximum penalty of \$24 000 and two years' imprisonment, but imposes a minimum penalty of a community-based order. For those who do not know, this involves counselling, rehabilitation and community service, which in my experience is hardly ever done. The taxpayer will also bear the cost of the trial and the cost of cleaning the memorial. It is no secret that I believe we should be tougher on crime and cease in our framing of perpetrators as victims themselves. In this case, who is the victim? The Australian public. It is the public and the memory of our heroes that have been gravely insulted and it is the public, through the taxes it pays, that will bear the cost of cleaning the monument, the trial—if one even occurs—and the inevitable community order should the man be found guilty.

Unfortunately, this is not the first time Australia has seen this sort of desecration of a monument. Take for example the Nambour War Memorial protest where insulting placards were placed over the memorial or when left-wing vandals defaced the war memorial at Warrandyte in Victoria last year, spray-painting “war is murder” on the monument. This sort of disrespect of national heroes is not limited to Australia. If one is to look at recent vandalism on war memorials in other English-speaking nations, there is a consistent theme of left-wing activism at its base. This sort of political activism makes Fremantle the perfect storm for such an insult. Fremantle is no stranger to this sort of political activism. One may recall the Fremantle local council attempting to “change the date” and push for a so-called cultural inclusivity on Australia Day.

It is therefore rather strange that there is no special protection for these sacred places in Western Australia, despite the fact that this sort of desecration is ongoing and increasing. Perhaps it is because in the past it went without saying that a person must not deface a memorial. However, it would seem that modern political activists choose to ignore the memo and act with no decorum whatsoever. Therefore, I think it is about time that we say something in law about the importance of memorials. We should move to define the places as protected and prosecute harshly those who seek to deface our history and disrespect our nation's heroes. Whether or not we agree with the wars Australia has fought, we must pay respect to those who paid the ultimate price. If someone has a disagreement, they should disagree through discourse, not through defacement.