

HOLODOMOR REMEMBRANCE DAY

Statement

HON CHARLES SMITH (East Metropolitan) [9.54 pm]: Before I begin my statement this evening, I would like to acknowledge in the public gallery Mr Bohdan Mykytiuk. He is a Ukrainian Australian who has a personal interest in what I am about to say.

Last Saturday, 24 November, marked Holodomor Remembrance Day on which Ukrainians commemorate victims of an artificial famine between 1932 and 1933, which was the result of Soviet dictator Joseph Stalin's order to force peasant households into collective farms. The precise number of Ukrainians who perished during the Holodomor, which means "murder by hunger", is unknown, but historians assert that somewhere between 3.3 million and 7.5 million people were starved to death in Ukraine as the Soviet government seized peasants' property and crops, closed the borders and denied any outside aid. To give you an idea, Madam President, that figure is the entire population of New South Wales. The Ukrainian countryside, home of the black earth, which was some of the most fertile land in the world, was reduced to a silent wasteland. In addition to those in Ukraine, millions of people in other agricultural regions of the Soviet Union were also subjected to forced collectivisation and starvation. From the man-made famines, purges, and Gulags of the former Soviet Union to Mao's Great Leap Forward in China and the killing fields of the Khmer Rouge, it is estimated that in excess of 100 million people died as a result of communist totalitarianism. This was all done in the name of equality and creating a utopia here on earth.

This appalling episode occurred only in the last century but already it is being largely forgotten. I find it very worrying that here in contemporary Australia, many people are almost totally ignorant of the suffering and death that occurred under those communist regimes. This is particularly evident among younger Australians. According to a poll commissioned this year by the Centre for Independent Studies, a majority of Australian millennials held a favourable view of socialism as an ideology, yet more than half of those polled did not know who Mao Zedong was. Approximately two-thirds either did not know who Stalin was or were not familiar with his bloody rule. This is a shocking indictment of the content and teaching in our education curriculum. We are churning out young citizens who are woefully oblivious to some of the worst disasters of the last century and, importantly, the causes behind them. By failing to properly educate our young people, we risk creating generations that know nothing about such dangerous doctrines and their collateral damage on our society.