

**MARTIN O'MEARA**

*Statement by Member for Collie–Preston*

**MR M.P. MURRAY (Collie–Preston)** [12.58 pm]: Last week the Collie community took part in commemorative activities to honour our adopted Victoria Cross hero, Martin O'Meara. The Australian and New Zealand Irish ambassador, His Excellency Noel White, was special guest at the Shire of Collie's civic reception, before laying a wreath in memory of Martin O'Meara at Soldiers Park in Collie. Martin O'Meara was born in Tipperary, Ireland in 1885 and settled in Australia in 1914. He worked as a sleeper cutter around Pinjarra and then Collie, before enlisting in the Australian Imperial Force in August 1915. He was awarded the Victoria Cross during World War I for his heroic actions at Pozières in France, where he put his life at risk to carry supplies and ammunition to no-man's-land on the battlefield; he also carried wounded soldiers on his return journey.

The newly opened Collie Senior High School performing arts centre was the venue for the one-act play *Under Any Old Gum Tree*, written by local playwright Noel O'Neill. The play tells Martin O'Meara's story, from his days log cutting in the bush around Collie, to his days during the Great War, to his final time at the Claremont lunatic asylum due to shell shock. I congratulate the two principal actors, Kieran Garvey and Rex Gray; Gaelforce Promotions; Fred Rea; Peter Murphy; Frank Murphy and Ed Croft; along with the students of Collie Senior High School performing arts centre, who contributed to making the event a great success. Following the play, a complement of Irish songs dedicated to Martin O'Meara and the Irish community were performed by Sean O'Rourke, Phil Beck, Fred Rea and Collie Senior High School student Courtney Salmeri. Their contribution rounded off an excellent evening in Collie.

*Sitting suspended from 1.00 to 2.00 pm*