

ARMENIAN GENOCIDE — GEORGE TRELOAR

Statement by Member for Hillarys

MR P.A. KATSAMBANIS (Hillarys) [12.53 pm]: I commend the House of Representatives of the United States of America for recently passing a resolution recognising one of the greatest human rights atrocities of the twentieth century—that is, the Armenian Genocide.

History records that from around 1914 to 1923, as the Ottoman Empire was collapsing, there was a systematic targeting for death or deportation of Armenian people living in the area of Asia Minor now known as Turkey. At the same time there were other ethnic groups that were similarly targeted, including the Assyrian community and the Greeks, especially those from the Pontos region. It is estimated that around 1.5 million Armenians, 300 000 Assyrians and 750 000 Greeks were systematically murdered over the decade. Millions more were displaced, which created one of the biggest refugee crises of all time.

One of the people who dealt with the aftermath of this refugee crisis was George Devine Treloar, DSO, MC, who was the Commissioner for Refugees for the League of Nations. Treloar was a decorated Australian war hero who worked tirelessly across northern Greece to help resettle the fleeing refugees. Following his great work in Europe, Treloar and his family settled in Western Australia. He became a well-known radio commentator in Perth and stood as a candidate for the Liberal Party in the Legislative Council seat of West Province in 1950. Fittingly, Treloar's work dealing with the aftermath of these horrific genocides was commemorated earlier this year with the dedication of a statute in the main street of his place of birth, Ballarat. Like Treloar's wonderful work, we should never forget the atrocities and horror of the Armenian Genocide, the Assyrian Genocide and the Pontian Greek Genocide. Lest we forget.