

## HERITAGE AND CULTURE

### *Motion*

**HON AARON STONEHOUSE (South Metropolitan)** [1.13 pm]: I move —

That the house —

- (a) expresses its concern over increasingly radical and divisive attacks upon Western Australia's heritage and culture, in particular —
  - (i) the City of Perth's attempted cancellation of the Christmas nativity event;
  - (ii) recent calls to remove statues and monuments;
  - (iii) the vandalisation of statues and monuments;
  - (iv) proposals to rename various locations and structures that bear the names of historical figures;
  - (v) recent and renewed calls to change the date of Australia Day; and
- (b) rejects policies and proposals that divide Western Australians on the basis of their racial identity or religious beliefs.

I have given a few examples in the motion, but I would like to mention a few more in the substantive debate. I think this is an important debate to have because over recent months—it has been a trend over years unfortunately—we have seen an importation of what seems like rather toxic sort of race relations from the United States being applied here in Australia, in Western Australia in particular. It seems rather irrelevant to the unique circumstances of our country and our state. It has seen marches that attract quite a lot of attention and, as I mentioned in the motion, it has seen the vandalisation of statues and monuments. I think it is sad because I think it shows an ignorance of history for a start. It is also driven by what I fear is a Marxist attack on the institutions that uphold our society. I know members will scoff at that, but I will go through this and explain a little bit about critical race theory that underpins a lot of these pushes in policy proposals.

Let me give a few examples of what this motion is trying to draw attention to and the concerns expressed in it. For instance, in 2017 there were calls from Karrie-Anne Kearing to change the name of the Peel region because it was supposedly offensive to Indigenous Australians. Thankfully, that call was rejected by the Premier, Mark McGowan, and by the opposition, so I am sure we can expect support from the government on this motion given its own Premier has rejected calls to rename regions.

In 2018 the Town of Bassendean attempted to cancel Australia Day and its Australia Day fireworks. Thankfully, that was unsuccessful. Bassendean ratepayers were polled and it was found that 65 per cent of them wanted to celebrate being Australian on 26 January while only 26 per cent wanted a new date.

**Hon Charles Smith:** How much did they pay to do that survey?

**Hon AARON STONEHOUSE:** That is a very good question, honourable member.

An attempt was made to rename Stirling Highway. Not too long ago, in August 2019, a so-called anthropologist claimed that Stirling Highway should be renamed and that we should not name our highways after old white guys. Of course, thankfully, this was rejected. This so-called anthropologist compared Governor Stirling, the founder of our state, to Martin Bryant, the lunatic gunman in Tasmania. Then in September 2019, the City of Perth's cultural development plan saw the scrapping of Christmas celebrations in an attempt to make the Christmas celebrations of the City of Perth more inclusive, which is complete nonsense. As members are aware, almost 60 per cent of Western Australians identify as Christian. Of course Christmas is a Christian celebration and we live in a secular state, so we do not want to put people out. Last time I spoke to any of my Jewish or Muslim friends, they had no problem with Christmas celebrations. They are not offended by it—neither are Christians offended by Eid celebrations or Hanukkah or any other Jewish celebration. In fact, most people seem rather tolerant and are able to get on with their lives without being offended by other religions celebrating their cultural practices.

More famously, the woke City of Fremantle cancelled its Australia Day celebrations and its Australia Day fireworks display because it was supposedly culturally insensitive. Not to be outdone by the City of Fremantle, a particular Greens Senator, Mr Jordon Steele-John, called for the destruction of historical statues. I thought it was quite remarkable that someone occupying the office of a Senator would be so ignorant of Western Australia's history. He called for the destruction of statues here in Western Australia, saying that they were symbols of white supremacy. He said that the names of these men are literally everywhere so it is time to stop celebrating these men and hold them accountable for the roles they played in WA's history of First Nation genocide. He misspelt genocide when he wrote that. The very learned Senator, that I am sure he is, knows his history! I am looking forward to any calls to rename Yagan Square. Of course, Yagan was a leader among Aboriginal people who fought against the settlers.

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He was a very brave warrior, by all accounts, but he killed several settlers before he was killed in turn by a settler. I suppose we should rename Yagan Square considering he was a man who waged war in his time.

More recently, in June this year, the statue of Captain James Stirling was vandalised. One scruffy individual painted the statue of Stirling. In recent weeks, somebody put up a new plaque on the statue of Stirling here in the city. That plaque reads something to the effect of, “On 28 October 1834, Captain Stirling led the Pinjarra massacre that killed up to 80 Noongar men, women and children.” The person responsible for putting that over the original plaque said that it was important that we get the full picture of history. I am paraphrasing somewhat, but the idea is that the statue does not tell the full picture; it tells it from one perspective and he is trying to correct the record by giving people the correct historical context of what happened. I would like to do that now because I think he has not given the correct historical context. Unfortunately, he has given us a very simplified and skewed version of it. From my own research, Captain James Stirling was not a perfect man. Who can be? No-one is perfect. We all fall short of the standards we set for ourselves. But he is certainly a great figure in the context of Western Australian history. He was, of course, the administrator of the Swan River settlement from June 1829, when it was established, until 1832. He then left for England for a short time. He was knighted, came back in 1834 and was the administrator again until 1838.

All told, he was not only the founder of the Western Australian colony, but also, for almost a decade, the ruler and patriarch of the colony. I will read from Stirling’s biography from the excellent online resource Australian Dictionary of Biography. This excerpt is written by F.K. Crowley. I encourage members to make use of that website. It is incredibly useful when looking at biographies of historical figures. In this biography it states —

In his early administration Stirling took a leading part in exploring the coastal districts near the Swan, Murray, Collie, Preston, Blackwood and Vasse Rivers, and the first settlements were sited there in preference to the areas east of the Darling Range. It was some time before his chief aides, Peter Broun, the colonial secretary and keeper of the accounts, and Lieutenant John Roe, R.N., the surveyor-general, were able to set up proper departments in Perth, and most routine decisions were made by the governor. On legal matters he sought the advice of William Mackie, the advocate-general. Stirling personally welcomed the early settlers, made it easy for any of them to obtain an audience with him and acted as a polite rubbing-post for their multitude of petty grievances. He was also attentive to the complaints of the lower orders.

I am not sure when the battle of Pinjarra started being referred to as the Pinjarra massacre—I think that is a rather recent renaming—but it is important to understand the context under which that took place. That is not to say that it is in any way not a tragedy; it absolutely is a tragedy. But it is important to understand that at the time of the early settlement of Western Australia by Europeans, Indigenous Australians, the Whadjuk people, who of course had been here for many thousands of years before Europeans ever set foot in this country, occupied the area around the Swan River, and the Pinjarra people were in the south west around Pinjarra. The Whadjuk people and the Pinjarra people had been at war with each other but around the time of the early European settlement, they had just brokered peace. A leader of the Pinjarra people—Calyute—conducted raids against settlers. He raided a flour mill. He killed a soldier and severely wounded another. An expedition led by Governor Stirling, with a posse of policemen and soldiers, went south into the Peel region to try to arrest Calyute and his followers. When Governor Stirling met up with those followers, he sent in a mounted detachment of his posse to try to arrest Calyute. If I am getting my history right, I believe they did not see him there, but they saw somebody else whom they had identified as having carried out raids before. That sighting resulted in a skirmish, several of the mounted detachment were unhorsed and, rather than fleeing and dispersing as had occurred during other conflicts, the Pinjarra people stood and fought quite bravely. They managed to kill one of the constables and severely wounded a captain, but that resulted in a battle with the Pinjarra people using spears and the colonists using muskets, and, of course, the Pinjarra people lost that battle. Anywhere from 11 to up to 80 Pinjarra people were tragically killed.

I encourage members to read *The Australian Frontier Wars 1788–1838* by John Connor. This was a battle between two groups for their very survival. On one side were the original inhabitants of Australia, the Indigenous Australians, fighting against European encroachment, and on the other were the Europeans, fighting against raids against their flour mills and livestock. European people were settling lands where the Indigenous people traditionally foraged for the yams that made up a large part of their diet. Tragically, in this case, it resulted in a violent conflict. Now, I do not think that is a reason to condemn someone like Governor Stirling. It is absolutely horrible what happened, but should we be tearing down his statue? It is a matter of historical fact that it happened. Was it avoidable? Probably—most likely. But this is a man who was obviously moulded by his time. He had a responsibility to protect the settlers of the colony. Putting up a plaque that merely draws attention to the massacre without any of the context behind it, I think, is an act of historical vandalism in itself.

Quite often the people who want to erase history and our heritage are trying to not only correct historical injustice—Lord knows there has been a lot of that—but also reshape our society and tear down those institutions upon which

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it is based. We see that quite often. We hear people calling for the decolonisation of Australia. Some protesters and activists have said to burn this whole thing down and that there is nothing salvageable from European settlement in Australia. That is absolutely tragic. I think quite a few good things have resulted from European settlement in Australia. Of course there was immense hardship, pain, suffering and injustice, but also we rely upon institutions now such as parliamentary democracy, the rule of law, the presumption of innocence—habeas corpus—and the idea of people having rights. These concepts were imported and we are the beneficiaries. Australia is an incredibly lucky country to have been founded when it was, especially taking into context other colonial experiences. Australia was able to achieve what America could not. Most of Australia's colonies were founded from 1788 onwards. Western Australia was founded in 1829. This was post the American Revolutionary War, so Australian people had the benefit of that entire experience being in the past and the British government having learnt from that experience. Therefore, when Australians wanted self-governance, we were able to achieve that without a violent revolutionary war.

Australia was very much a country founded on liberal ideals that were prominent in the west at that time. Australia was spared a lot of the hardship that other colonies suffered. That is evidenced by the fact that the British government outlawed slavery in 1833 and as a colony we were spared that great injustice. Western Australians and Australians were spared that great injustice of the institution of slavery. Of course, instances of slavery occur in Australian history, but those instances are very much the exception and not the rule. They were illegal acts that should have been stamped out by the government at the time.

As further evidence of the liberal foundations of Western Australia and Australia, I will read for members the proclamation written by Governor James Stirling on 18 June 1829. I found it very enlightening. It states —

And whereas by the Establishment of His Majesty's Authority in the Territory aforesaid, the Laws of the United Kingdom as far as they are applicable to the Circumstances of the Case, do therein immediately prevail and become Security for the Rights, Privileges and Immunities of all His Majesty's Subjects found or residing in such Territory.

...

I do hereby give Notice that if any Person or Persons shall be convicted of behaving in a fraudulent, cruel or felonious Manner towards the Aborigines of the Country, such Person or Persons will be liable to be prosecuted and tried for the Offence, as if the same had been committed against any other of His Majesty's Subjects.

That is interesting because, of course, Stirling and those who followed him did not live up to that standard. They failed to live up to and fulfil the standard that they created. Just because people fell short of the standards that they set for themselves does not mean that those standards should be rejected. The institutions that we have inherited are incredibly useful and effective in preventing the arbitrary use of power, preserving people's rights and liberties, and preserving their life and property. They should be celebrated, not torn down as though they were poison to begin with. Unfortunately, we see that happening. We see things such as critical race theory, which claims that the law and legal institutions are inherently racist, that those who claim they are colourblind only perpetuate racism, and, of course, that race is a social construct created by white people to keep people of colour down. I would like to talk more about that, but I do not think I will have enough time.

**Hon Alannah MacTiernan:** Can you tell us about Rolf Harris? How do you think that should be dealt with?

**The PRESIDENT:** Order, minister!

**Hon AARON STONEHOUSE:** I am not sure of the role that Rolf Harris had in founding Western Australia or founding the institutions that create our parliamentary democracy.

**Hon Alannah MacTiernan** interjected.

**The PRESIDENT:** Order! The member has limited time.

**Hon Alannah MacTiernan** interjected.

**The PRESIDENT:** Order!

**Hon Peter Collier:** Quiet!

**The PRESIDENT:** Order! Member, I will tell people to be quiet. I am just going to interrupt Hon Aaron Stonehouse for a moment to remind members that Hansard reporters are no longer seated on the floor of the chamber. They are seated above us, and I know that they find it extremely difficult to hear what members are saying when even a slight bubble of noise emerges. To make their lives a bit easier so that they can do their job for you and put

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your words on the public record, please do them the courtesy of listening to members who are on their feet either in silence or quietly.

**Hon AARON STONEHOUSE:** Thank you, Madam President.

Recently, we have seen the popularity of the Black Lives Matter movement, which I find interesting. It is a statement that nobody could possibly disagree with. Of course black lives matter. That can be said unreservedly. Who would not agree with such a statement? The problem, of course, is that the organisation called Black Lives Matter, which is an organisation that organises some rallies, and pushes and advocates for certain policy outcomes, was founded by overt Marxists. They have said that they were trained as Marxists. They apply, again, this critical race theory, which is tied, of course, to the critical theory that comes from the school of Frankfurt. The policy objectives of that organisation are the destruction of the nuclear family and capitalism. It is not just a racial justice movement; it is much more than that. A lot of people who go to rallies do not know that. They go to rallies because they believe in racial justice, and rightly so. However, it is concerning, because a small core of people run these organisations and are agitating and pushing within the halls of academia and in universities. They are true Tankies. They are true believers in the Marxist cause of tearing down society and rebuilding it in their image.

I fear that there really are barbarians at the gates. Of course, these barbarians are not made up of Germanic tribes or Picts; these barbarians have trust funds, blue hair and daddy issues. If these people want to disappoint their parents, I would much prefer that they did it in a way that did not affect the rest of us. I am sure that I will hear from the left side of the chamber, but I think that most people in Western Australia are not ashamed of being Western Australian or Australian. They want to celebrate 26 January. They want to celebrate their Foundation Day, whether we call it Western Australia Day or not. They want to celebrate the great things that we have in this state, such as the rule of law, equality before the law, an independent judiciary, and parliamentary democracy. They want to celebrate that people can come into Parliament and berate the Premier and not have to fear being locked up by the police, and that people can make their own wealth and fortune in this country. That is what has brought throngs of migrants and refugees here. People who came from Europe to flee communism came here because of the freedom, and the promise of freedom, that Australia and Western Australia provide. People came here from the former Yugoslavia and from behind the Iron Curtain. Nobody wants to move to a country that is a despotic communist hellhole. Of course, that is not the policy objective of these groups, but it is the unintended consequence of these groups. No-one got shot trying to escape West Germany for East Germany or braved shark-infested waters trying to escape Florida for Cuba. They come to countries like Australia because of the promise of freedom it provides. We should be proud of that.

**HON SUE ELLERY (South Metropolitan — Leader of the House)** [1.34 pm]: I want to thank the honourable member for raising some of the issues he raised in his motion, but the government certainly cannot support the motion. We do not accept the assumptions in the language or that our culture and heritage are under attack. It would be far more civilised to have a debate about how we can recognise those elements of our history that we now judge to have been either harsh, cruel or racist, or whatever they were. A far better approach would be to debate how we do that. How do we pay our respect to what happened in the past without pretending that it did not happen or being disrespectful of those people who were living by the values of their time? We recognise that we now hold a different set of values and that perhaps some things that were done in the context of events had negative effects on people at the time and those who followed and were, indeed, harsh and cruel. We need to find a way to have a debate about that without creating some kind of fake cultural war and trying to pretend that the process of having that debate and those things being raised in public forums is somehow an attack on our culture and heritage and is somehow divisive in itself. In fact, there will be different views about how we should do that. That is right and good and how it should be. There will be different points of view about how those things should be recognised. However, if someone starts from the premise, as this motion does, that, for example, a proposal to rename various locations constitutes a radical and divisive attack, they reveal their own motivation and point of view, which is that they are looking to create some kind of division and perpetrate this fake cultural war. Things that are under attack, in the language of the member, are things that we need to talk about and debate in a civilised fashion.

This motion should have been recast for us to have a debate about how to balance those things, which is really hard to do. At the time, many people who did things that we now judge to be cruel and harsh did them in the genuine belief that they were doing the right thing. Many did not. Many people knew that what they were doing was cruel and harsh but they did it anyway. However, some people genuinely believed that they were doing the right thing. We need to find a way to have a debate about how we recognise that and not be disrespectful to those people, but acknowledge that there are two stories to be told about events, monuments, or places that we want to name. We have no desire to rush around and remove statues and monuments; that is not our priority or intention. However, there is merit in some of the work being done by people who want to tell another story about those monuments and statues, and want to put a plaque there that explains what happened and the consequences of the actions of the person or event being commemorated in that monument or statue. It is about telling a dual story. We should acknowledge the difficult and contentious parts of our history without pretending that they never happened.

**Extract from Hansard**

[COUNCIL — Wednesday, 23 September 2020]

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I think the Australian War Memorial is a really great example of how to do that. Members should look at the way its creators have tackled some really difficult issues. It is a great way to tell a story. It acknowledges history, the good and the bad of that history, and does it respectfully. It involves the people who felt marginalised and hurt by various actions taken by the Australian military over time and does it in a way that is respectful. It does not obliterate our history or pretend that it never happened, but it does it in a way that is respectful. Last year, the Australian War Memorial unveiled a monument recognising Indigenous soldiers. Brendan Nelson, the then director of the Australian War Memorial—I do not think he is the director anymore—and former federal opposition leader was reported as saying —

... the monument represented a “significant step” to recognise Indigenous soldiers.

“They denied their Aboriginality, denied their kinship and families to enlist, serve, fight, suffer and die for the young nation that had taken so much from them, often enlisting along ... side the sons of those who had perpetrated violence against their own families,” ...

The article goes on to state —

Australian Defence Force chief, General Angus Campbell, described the sculpture as powerful reminder” of Indigenous people and their stories.

“They were our unknown sailors, soldiers, aviators,” he said.

“It is a history that should be recognised and celebrated.”

Uncle David Williams, a Bundjalung man and Vietnam War veteran, said the monument was a fitting tribute.

“You don’t have to be Aboriginal but you can come and say thank you,” he said.

“How good’s that?”

That is the way to get the balance right. That is the way to recognise that things happened, and now, when we look back, we would say that they were not appropriate. It was not appropriate that when Indigenous soldiers came back to Australia, they were denied the same benefits that were granted to white veterans. That was not appropriate, but it happened. We need to recognise it and rectify the fact that it was unacknowledged and unrecognised for so long. That is the way to do this, not create some nonsense that there is some kind of attack on our heritage and culture. We need to acknowledge that some things happened in our history that were not good and did not have positive consequences. We can do that in a sensible and respectful way that recognises our history, but let us not pretend that those people who want to put a plaque alongside a monument are somehow attacking our culture and heritage. They are not; they just want to make sure that the other side of those stories are told. If we look at what the Australian War Memorial has done, we can see a great example.

There are a few variations in the theme in the honourable member’s motion. Regarding the nativity, I am sure the City of Perth will figure that out. It will get a new mayor in a matter of weeks and I am sure the matter will be resolved. The commissioner at the time said that the city was looking for more events but on a smaller scale. Nonetheless, I think the issue will be resolved. Regarding Australia Day, again, it is not a priority of this government to change the date, but there needs to be a way to recognise, as a nation, that the arrival of Europeans had an impact on the people who were already living here. How do we acknowledge that in a respectful way? There is nothing wrong with having a debate about that. Coming up with the process to have that debate is not an attack on our culture or heritage.

We are not going to support this motion. It is trying to create a fake cultural war. No-one supports violence or vandalism, but there is an entirely civilised way to recognise our history—the good and the bad—without pretending that the process to do so is an attack on our culture and heritage.

**HON MICHAEL MISCHIN (North Metropolitan — Deputy Leader of the Opposition)** [1.43 pm]: I rise to make a few comments in support of the motion. We can argue about the specific particulars that Hon Aaron Stonehouse has identified as illustrations of what he considers to be increasingly radical and divisive attacks upon our heritage and culture. We can also argue about the merits of whether certain monuments ought to be renamed or removed for good reason, renaming or dual-naming various locations, and the various specifics. However, the member is asking only that we express our concern over “increasingly radical and divisive attacks” on heritage and culture. He uses illustrations, and members might agree with some or all of those particulars, but there is a disturbing theme going through our society at the moment and I will speak more about that in a moment. Otherwise, the honourable member calls upon the house to reject “policies and proposals that divide Western Australians on the basis of their racial identity or religious beliefs”. Who can argue against that? I would have thought that would be patent; is that not what we are here for? I challenge any member to say that there is anything wrong with paragraph (b), which indicates what the member is asking us to reject. I do not see how we can. That is what I am here for and it is one of the reasons that I am proud to be in this country. For all its shortcomings and all the things we can do better or might have done

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wrong in the past in Australia, or in Western Australia, we have, as western civilisation has generally, an aspiration to improve and be embracing and tolerant and to work to elevate the human condition.

Hon Sue Ellery proved part of Hon Aaron Stonehouse's case. She gave the illustration of the Australian War Memorial. That was not a bunch of people spray-painting the war memorial and tearing down plaques they did not agree with and replacing them with their own ideas of how history ought to be interpreted. That is not the way to do it. No-one gives licence for someone to tear down a public monument on their own initiative or put up their alternative interpretations. There is a way to do that, as Hon Sue Ellery illustrated. We do not see that at the moment.

My parents came to this country after the Second World War as "displaced persons" or refugees, if you like. They came out here as children with what was left of their property in a few suitcases and what was left of their families after the most destructive conflict in human history had gone on for some six years, if we do not count all the years that led up to it. In every month in the final 12 months of that conflict, a million people died. My parents were in refugee camps for several years before they managed to come out here. They wanted to go to America, because it was the land of opportunity. They thought people rode kangaroos down the streets in Australia back in those days. That is how little they knew about this place. It was out the back of beyond. I am delighted that they made it here rather than America, but it was a matter of chance rather than choice. I am proud of what they did. They were looking for a society of tolerance, peace, stability and institutions that came from western civilisation, including, whether or not members are religious, the Judaeo-Christian ethic of individual value. They came here for those institutions and I am proud that they did. I am proud of what they have done here and I am proud of Australia and Western Australia for what it tried to achieve and continues to achieve. It is a tribute to this place that it is always looking at self-improvement, not to be run by a rabble who think that they ought to know better and that their view of history and of our culture and heritage is somehow superior to everyone else's. To change institutions because of a small group of people without the mandate of the silent majority—the others—is simply an offence to everything our society, our heritage and our culture stands for.

There are arguments to be raised, as Hon Sue Ellery mentioned, that people should not be judged by the values of their times. We can look back with regret and remorse over things that have or have not been done in the past, but we should also recognise that it is part of our history and embrace other cultures' traditions and heritage, not change our own and abandon it out of some oversensitivity because someone might be offended by it. In every society, a group will look for ways of being offended by something to prove their point and will utterly reject the views of any others and the society that allows them to express those views. We are living in a society that, sadly, is being exploited in that regard. People who tear down or stick plaques on monuments they do not like because they think that they have a superior moral right to do so have nothing constructive to offer, other than to destroy and criticise. It is not as though this is not known. Before the Second World War, exactly this sort of thing happened in most of Europe. On the basis of ethnicity or religion, people turned against their neighbours, rejected their values and tried to destroy them and make them homogenous with whomever happened to be in charge at the time. We have seen the tragedy of that in other countries since. To have small groups even tacitly endorsed as being able to do this as a legitimate means of protest or as a legitimate means of changing institutions is simply misguided. We will never learn from history if we just ignore it. We should judge institutions and people not by the character of what happened in the past but by how they perform now. Human history goes back long before the written record. We continue to build on that heritage by understanding what happened in the past, vowing not to do it again and improving ourselves by it. But we are finding that there is an increasing level of intolerance by a small vocal minority who have accreted to themselves an assumed moral superiority and who seek to rewrite history and to criticise and to demand their own way to the exclusion of all others, when there is no respectful debate of the character that Hon Sue Ellery claimed we should be having. The interjection a little earlier by Hon Alannah MacTiernan is an example of that. What the hell has Rolf Harris got to do with this!

**Hon Alannah MacTiernan** interjected.

**Hon MICHAEL MISCHIN:** Perhaps the member can tell us about that. But what does it have to do with —

**Hon Alannah MacTiernan:** I am just asking the question: should you take down Rolf Harris statues?

**Hon MICHAEL MISCHIN:** Has he got one?

**Hon Alannah MacTiernan:** He has had plenty of plaques and memorials that have been removed.

**Hon MICHAEL MISCHIN:** The member can talk about that. Madam President?

For what it is worth, none of the paragraphs of the motion mention Rolf Harris. I have not heard anyone mention his name. Hon Alannah MacTiernan may be fantasising about something, but it certainly is not the subject of this motion. If she has a problem, perhaps she ought to get some help with it.

**Hon Alannah MacTiernan** interjected.

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**The PRESIDENT:** Minister, order!

**Hon MICHAEL MISCHIN:** Statues and monuments that have been established by a community to commemorate the figures in its past need to be removed by that society only if it takes the view that they ought to be. The small minority is not entitled to destroy public property and to demand that we ignore our history and those who have contributed to where we are today. Many of our historical figures, being human, had flaws, but they contributed in other ways and that is what they are being memorialised for—not their faults, although we recognise that they had them. Perhaps only those on the Labor Party side of this chamber are perfect in every way or will rewrite history to make sure that that happens. Every human has flaws, but it is what they managed to achieve that is good for society—the efforts, sacrifices and tribulations that they endured in order to build a society that allows us to enjoy the benefits that we have today—that needs to be commemorated.

I am astonished by the attitude of many of these groups. I have no other home than Western Australia. To be called an invader of this country is appalling. I am not sure where these people expect me to go. I am more indigenous than anyone who was born after me, unless I take into account race, which I thought we were not supposed to do. Perhaps there are two rules for that. This is my home and I have dedicated my life to making my way here and also improving it. That is what I have been trying to do. I have not worked to undermine society, but to improve it, both in my work and in the way that I comport myself. I do not disagree that I fall short in many respects, but I try. Hopefully, I try to improve things. I am sure all of us do. But should a statue be created for us and to then be somehow condemned for our flaws on the basis of something that we may have said or done in the past, which in the future is thought to be different and does not meet the values of some distant future that we cannot even contemplate, is a sad thing. It is dangerous that we could be expunged from the history books and from *Hansard* not because of what we have contributed, but because of some perceived flaw that someone might pick up in the future. That is when we head towards the prescience of authors such as George Orwell in 1984. We are dealing with a time in which people take it upon themselves to attack our institutions and the ways in which we commemorate our achievements.

Hon Aaron Stonehouse pointed to the commemoration of Christmas and those sorts of festivals. There are not that many devout Christians, or people who go to church or whatever worship they consider to be important to their faith, in our society nowadays. That is the same with other religious groups. We should respect those views. But to change an element of our culture, like the celebration of Christmas, because a few people think that others might be excluded or feel unsafe in it is an absurdity. I would be happy to celebrate Hanukkah or whatever as a sign of respect to others. I do not believe in it, and I certainly do not feel threatened by it. We seem to want to proactively remove these elements that we have grown up with that are a celebration of a good time, of festivities, of fellowship and of love between people, all because a small group thinks that someone might be upset by it and might not like it. That is not what Australian culture is all about. This country has prided itself on being diverse and accepting the views, opinions and cultures of others. But that acceptance of others' cultures and ideas should not be at the expense of our own.

We have in the space of the 200-odd years, since Western Australia was colonised developed our own culture. There are very good bits of it. To sacrifice those things because a few people do not like them and are prepared to be destructive is not the way that our society ought to operate. I think we can do nothing other than accept at least paragraph (b) of Hon Aaron Stonehouse's motion. I do not see how any sensible, responsible member of Parliament could vote against rejecting policies and proposals that divide Western Australians on the basis of their racial identity or religious beliefs, however we might perceive the examples to support the motion. It may not be the same as Hon Aaron Stonehouse's, but how could we vote against that? How could we not express concern over increasingly radical and divisive attacks on various things. As has been pointed out, there is always scope for debate and discussion. But to attack institutions and to do so in a radical and divisive way does nothing to promote the causes of harmony and mutual respect in our community or, indeed, advance the causes that are being promoted. Frankly, it is counterproductive. I think that those who undertake that action really do not want harmony. They want to object. They want to make a noise. They want to be divisive and to use that lever against the rest of society because they do not want to be a part of it. They offer nothing in return, other than to attack its fundamentals and to make people feel uncomfortable and threatened, and to exclude them.

I think we should support the motion. Members may disagree with the detail of it or with some of the examples that are used, but I support the motion because I know that it is going in the right direction. It is looking towards a society that is inclusive, that is respectful in its debates, that acknowledges its history and the mistakes of the past but that does not destroy its own fabric. That is what has made it a place worth living in up until now. I hope that it has the resilience to endure it. I do not necessarily think it is teetering on the brink now, but unless we make a stand and say that these are the sorts of things that we as a Parliament reject, the slide will begin, if not continue. I urge members to have an open mind about the sentiment behind the policy and the words of the motion and to support it.

**HON ALISON XAMON (North Metropolitan)** [2.00 pm]: I rise to indicate that the Greens will not support this motion, principally because we do not accept the premise upon which the motion has been established. We will

not support motions that are pretty much a grab bag of confected outrage from a series of right-wing Facebook memes. I think we can do better than that in this chamber. It is astonishing that this motion calls for an expression of concern about radical and divisive attacks on our heritage and culture, yet no-one here has spoken about the actual destruction of Aboriginal heritage that we saw occur in Juukan Gorge or the erosion of the World Heritage-listed rock art on the Burrup Peninsula for the sake of gas corporate giants or the various ongoing failures of the Aboriginal Heritage Act that mean that real heritage is being destroyed for corporate profit.

It is ridiculous that consultation and informed public debate about what the priorities of the city's small businesses for Christmas have identified, the crimes and atrocities committed by some of the people we honour with monuments and statues and placenames, and all the implications of the current date of Australia Day are seen as somehow being attacks on heritage and culture. This motion suggests either that our culture is not strong enough to withstand a genuine and inclusive debate about our past, our future and what we want Australia to be, or that those who have concerns should simply shut up, sit down and stop talking about ways to make Australia and our society better. I do not agree with either of those premises.

Let us talk about Australia Day. We literally could have any date for Australia Day. It is entirely up to us. We have had different dates for Australia Day since Federation. We could pick any number of meaningful days in our history at any point. Frankly, I would like to have another public holiday during the second half of the year instead of crowding them all into the first six months of the year. I give a shout-out to our union movement that has ensured that we have public holidays in the first place. Australia Day has not always been held on 26 January, or even in January for that matter. Australia Day started as a fundraising effort for the First World War and was originally held in July. Because so much of this debate seems to be about people wanting to ensure that their own heritage is acknowledged, I would like to say that I had two great-grandfathers who fought in the First World War. One fought in Gallipoli and lost an arm. He died when I was six. The other great-grandfather fought at Villers-Bretonneux and lost an eye. He died when I was a baby. Just to be clear, my Australian heritage is well entrenched.

This motion talks about how things are divisive, yet it supports keeping Australia Day on 26 January, a date that is just as easily claimed as Invasion Day. That is what First Nation people are telling us. It has been marked as a day of mourning in First Nation communities since as far back as 1938. That is how far back that was recognised as a problematic date. That is part of our history as well. Being told that celebrating Australia Day on 26 January is a problematic date is not new, yet people are insisting that we have to cling to it. They are denying the hurt, the harm and the divisiveness that is at the heart of celebrating that particular date as the date on which we acknowledge that we are one as Australians. It is a choice that we keep making to pretend that there is not a problem. It is far more divisive, I think, to cling to a bad date and pretend that those who have a legitimate complaint about it are acting in bad faith. That is more divisive than to openly discuss how the current date represents many things, some of which, frankly, are very bad things for many Australians. We are talking about a history of land theft, massacres and rapes—atrocity after atrocity. These are a real part of our history. It is really that simple, and it should not be that big a deal to acknowledge the serious issues and to change the date.

**Hon Colin Tincknell** interjected.

**Hon ALISON XAMON:** Shoosh! The member will get his time. I want to talk about the alleged cancellation of the Christmas nativity. The context of this from the City of Perth is that we are talking about holding a mass gathering event in the midst of a pandemic. Although it is less well attended than other events—that is a fact—the risks are still considered to be high, as are the resourcing implications, including for the police, who would need to substantially increase their presence to ensure security and, importantly, maintain social distancing. The police would need between eight and 10 weeks to plan for the event. It is unfortunate that the City of Perth, like every other local council, has to think about which activities it will run in light of the pandemic, because it is so uncertain and we do not know what will happen, particularly around Christmas time. The council has had to think about how it will spend its money and how that will affect the residents and ratepayers of the City of Perth. I thought that the one thing the mover of the motion would have wanted would be for the market to determine what people think is valuable and worthwhile. The City of Perth minutes of 26 May this year show that it undertook broad consultation to identify priority projects to assist with the rebound of the city's economy. The council felt that it was important to consult on and be responsive to what people said they wanted if the council was to spend public money on a public event. The Christmas nativity simply was not identified by its stakeholders as a priority. That is not because anyone is trying to kill Christmas; it is just that, on the scale of things, it was not considered to be the highest priority.

I have looked at what was considered a priority. People supported holding the Christmas concerts because they feel they are very family friendly and they want to see them continue. The Christmas lights trail continues to be very popular, as were markets and school holiday events. There are, of course, a huge number of ways to incorporate the nativity story into other projects that the city is doing and a range of ways to tell the nativity story, and the city has committed to doing that within both the city and its small local communities. I have taken a particularly keen interest in this issue because I am a churchgoing Christian. My congregation is the Uniting Church in the city. For



members who do not know, that consists of Trinity Church, Wesley Church and Ross Memorial Church. I am so active in my congregation that I am a member of my church council. Members would think that if anyone would be outraged by what is not happening with Christmas in the city, it would be my congregation and my church council. I can tell members that no such outrage exists. We do not feel like we are being stopped from doing anything that we want to do to celebrate Christmas. In fact, we are looking forward to doing a range of things to celebrate Christmas. I have skin in the game on the issue of celebrating church and Christmas in the city, and I can tell members that it is not an issue.

I have read the City of Perth's report on the social value, risk factors and returns for the various mass gathering events that we usually have through the holiday season, and it is a very thoughtful piece that really looks into how the city can provide cultural and financial value while minimising risk and maintaining flexibility, in line with the state guidelines on events. I am guessing that the mover of the motion either did not read it or does not accept that the city's first responsibility is to the people and the businesses within it, who are paying their rates.

With regard to the survey I discussed earlier, almost all respondents indicated that they wanted the city, as a priority, to do more to provide support and advocacy for people who are experiencing homelessness. That is what the survey indicated, and that is a real thing, as opposed to the idea that the City of Perth is trying to kill Christmas, because it simply is not.

I want to say something about my personal heritage as well, because it seems to be pertinent to this debate and what we are trying to talk about here. My personal heritage goes back to the Swan River settlers. I am a direct descendant of Richard Barndon, Frances Friend and Walter and Tabitha Jones; I am a seventh generation Western Australian. In fact, on my father's side, my ancestry goes back to the Port Phillip settlers and I am pleased to say that I finally found some convict heritage as well. One of my ancestors founded Thomastown in Victoria. I am also a direct descendant of James Brittain, who was my great-great-grandfather. He was responsible for building the Barracks Arch, the Cloisters and the church that is my church—the Wesley Church, formerly Methodist, now Uniting Church, in the city. I have a great personal attachment to the history of the European establishment of this state. It is my history and my blood, and it is where I come from. However, I think it is really important that we talk about monuments and memorials to the people who established this state, including those who are my ancestors.

I am sorry if people do not like hearing that some of the people we commemorate with statues and other memorials have a problematic history, but the fact is that they do, and I am not sorry enough to not talk about that and to enable other people to talk about it. It is really important that people are able to speak, and I am certainly not sorry enough to suggest that people whose families have been directly affected by some of the more shameful acts in our history should simply sit down and shut up.

The suggestion that calls for statues to be removed are divisive is a position that one can hold only if one wants to deny the reality of our history and what it means to lionise these people through public art and monuments, and to not engage with the confronting and difficult parts of their actions and legacies. I do not personally support the vandalising of such statues and monuments, but I at least understand the impulse to do so. The conversations that need to be had are being denied, and this motion is part of that denial.

I would like to instead see more public art to contextualise what we have, rather than vandalism. I am reminded, for example, of how the *Fearless Girl* statue, facing the charging bull statue on Wall Street, impacted on the perception of the bull. Even the artist said that the presence of *Fearless Girl* turned the bull into a villain, despite the fact that *Fearless Girl* was effectively an advertising stunt. But that kind of installation costs money; vandalism is a more direct expression of the outrage people feel, especially when even the mere mention of calls for things to be different is met with responses like this motion. I do not support vandalism, but I do understand it.

On the issue of place names, there are two issues with naming places after historical colonial figures. One is an issue similar to that which I discussed earlier, about the memorialisation of people with statues. For example, I welcome the recent decision to rename the King Leopold Ranges the Wunaamin Miliwundi Ranges. I hope I pronounced that right; if I struggle to pronounce it correctly, it is a reflection of how much more we need to bring First Nation languages into our everyday life. But it is ridiculous to stand here and suggest that those ranges should continue to be named after someone responsible for the deaths of millions for the sake of shipping commodities. It is ridiculous to say that we should not have a conversation about what it means to name places after people who committed massacres, who stole land, and whose presence introduced untold disease and death.

It is ridiculous for this motion to suggest that if we dare to have a conversation about these issues, it is inherently divisive. That is effectively to pretend that the division does not already exist, and that even if it does exist, it does not matter. I cannot figure out how to reconcile that, unless the corollary is that our First Nation people and their history do not matter. I think they do.

The other issue is that we often obscure and overwrite the existing First Nation names. If members are concerned about attacks on culture and erasing language and place names, I point out that when we erase First Nation names,

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it is most certainly an attack on history and culture. I welcome moves to undertake the dual naming of a range of areas in Western Australia. I think that is really positive. I get very excited when the range of history is made available. For example, Exmouth has done a really wonderful job of incorporating its entire history, from First Nation people's history right through to how the town was established. It has embraced all of that. Increasingly, one can learn about the extensive, comprehensive history of many places. I do not think that is a threat to white history; it is simply value-adding to include the entire history. Sometimes that will mean that some of the history of white settlement will not be positive and might even be ugly; but it is really important, for the sake of history, to be honest and be prepared to put everything out there.

I am proud that we have come so far as a society that those who have been without voices for so long are finally able to say, "The status quo excludes and undervalues me; I am a citizen of this country, and I deserve to be treated as such." Although it is no surprise to me to see a motion like this, which basically cries out to social conservatives and pretends that the Australia of the 1950s was fair and reasonable for anyone other than white, heterosexual, Christian men, it does surprise me to see it coming from a libertarian. Libertarians are supposedly focused on individual freedoms, but this is a straight-up call to the kind of conservatism that limits freedoms only to the chosen few and ignores and denies the experiences of everyone else. Telling people that they cannot have a voice and that they should sit down and shut up when they finally start to express concerns about ongoing decades and centuries of exclusion is the last thing I would have expected of this party.

This is not about attacks on heritage; it is about attacks on white, heterosexual, Christian heritage of a very particular flavour. Giving others a voice does not equate to silencing one's own voice. This white, Christian heritage is my heritage, and I do not feel silenced or shamed about where I come from. It is part of who I am and part of my background. As a Christian in this city, I do not feel that I am being shut down by anyone from being able to celebrate Christmas. There was one thing that the mover of the motion said that I completely agree with, and that is that other people are not calling for the erasure of Christmas—particularly the Jewish and Muslim communities. That is true; that is completely the case. The only people making the claim that Christmas is being killed are far-right and QAnon troublemakers who have far too much time on their hands and who spend too much time on their keyboards and not enough time actually out and about, doing good work and trying to actually listen to what people are saying.

There is plenty for libertarians to be outraged about, not least the steady decline of our civil liberties, Western Australia's slide into becoming a police state, and ongoing attacks on our democracy. That could have been a motion; nevertheless, it may be a motion for another time. However, I do not accept the premise of this motion. I do not accept that giving people a voice who have not had a voice for so long is about silencing anybody else. I do not feel that history is being shut down. I feel that people are calling for a broader history and I welcome that as someone who is a descendant of the Swan settlers and I welcome that as a Christian.

**HON CHARLES SMITH (East Metropolitan) [2.20 pm]:** I would like to make a brief contribution to today's motion. I would like to extend and explore some of the ideas that Hon Aaron Stonehouse was just getting to as his speech came to a close. Since the advent of globalism, cosmopolitanism and the subsequent rise of radical left-wing ideologies, it is no secret that our western traditions have been under attack from those who lament the perceived western imperialism. According to left-wing dogma, minority groups suffer greatly under western traditions as the west seeks to impose its hegemony and strip them of their rights. Western tradition does no such thing. Western culture has welcomed and afforded minorities the right to live in a free and accepting society. Australia is a multicultural country and that is never going to change. The great irony today is, of course, that as the west has become more cosmopolitan, the attack on western traditions has intensified. If cosmopolitanism is about being a citizen of the world and appreciating cultures other than our own, why does this moral view not extend to the appreciation of the western tradition? Western tradition offers locals a sense of belonging through solidarity mechanisms such as holidays, our festivals and memorial services. These events bring people together, providing us with tangible links that enable belonging. Yet, given the freedoms of the west, no-one is forced to attend these events or participate in religious ceremonies. However, that is still not good enough for the leftist factions in a political world, who perceive the success of the west as an opportunity to tear it down.

It seems that there is a desire out there to turn the west into some sort of sterile monoculture in which we are all the same but we celebrate our diversity. This offers no sense of belonging or tradition. Rather, it has locals living in fear that their way of life will somehow offend someone and for that they have to atone. This argument is hypocritical. It trips over itself. It ties itself in knots. The great irony is, of course, that under liberal democratic principles, people can live without fear, without being under the direct control of a government, and they can choose their beliefs and choose their way of life. This is why the west is so accepting of minorities, yet society has reached a point at which those liberal democratic principles do not extend to an appreciation of the west itself.

In essence, it appears now that people who live under western traditions have become the minority. They have a small nuclear family; they may have a white picket fence outside the front of their property. They may attend a church and practise their religion or even go to the gym. A backlash against liberal institutions has gained momentum globally,

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and this can be reflected in a recent study I have been looking at. There is an independent watchdog organisation called Freedom House. In 2018, that organisation recorded the twelfth year in a row in which the number of liberal democracies suffering setbacks outnumbered those that had made gains by increasing freedoms and bolstering the rule of law. Who is responsible for this? The liberal academic elite should hang their heads in shame because for years, particularly inside universities, they have spewed anti-west Marxist dogma to impress upon students in the socialist-obsessed university sector. Anti-west sensibilities and the cult of social justice have become fashionable and something to aspire to. Subsequently, this attitude has spread through society like COVID-19, infecting the impressionable minds of the young as they seek to find their place on the pseudo moral high ground that has been constructed for them by the unelected intellectual elite.

**Hon Aaron Stonehouse** interjected.

**Hon CHARLES SMITH:** Quite. Slowly, by stealth, those unelected elite, high on a self-righteous cocktail of critical theory, have begun to impose their will on society, offering no room for freedom or access to their liberal democratic rights. But there is some good news: the revolt has begun. What can we expect when the elite have gone too far in their quest for cultural deprivation? The fracture in the mainstream is caused by the failings of liberalism whereby enough of the population have felt deprived for long enough. Cultural deprivation is aroused by overzealous globalists and out-of-touch elites who went too far. Enough people are now waking up and saying, “No; we have had enough.” Their voices now bubble over within that fracture and if political parties wish to remain relevant, they need to start listening to the will of the people.

I will conclude with a short statement: Diving down deep into this issue that the honourable member has raised, the real driver of the current politically correct madness, as I see it, is the rise of post-structuralism in our education. Postmodernity is an ideology that has no truth. It sees the world in discourses of endless and equal value, created and re-created by the power and vice of language. The consequence is that changing language gives us the power to change reality, thus, labelling everything becomes an act of empowerment. This obsession with how everything is represented, versus what actually is, means that traditional power relationships, such as capital versus labour—I remind the government that it seems to have forgotten that one, or does the minister remember those —

**Hon Alannah MacTiernan:** Yes.

**Hon CHARLES SMITH:** — that make up the contest in the centre of politics become lost and politics becomes a fake game, which it is today, of yelling our own discourse louder than anybody else’s. The sadness of it all is that the underlying reality of history rolls on and on, and no issues can ever be resolved in favour of the majority.

**HON ALANNAH MacTIERNAN (North Metropolitan — Minister for Regional Development) [2.28 pm]:** It might surprise the parties opposite that I agree with a few aspects of what they have said. I think that in some quarters, there has been a desire to cut down discourse. I note the current attacks on J.K. Rowling, which I certainly would not support. As always, there are some examples or rightful critique of the way we manage the freedom of expression. We should not be arguing that certain things cannot be discussed, but the parties on the other side have gone much, much further than that and, in my view, are showing a great deal of resentment towards what Hon Alison Xamon characterised as the rightful attempt by many people to ensure that a more profound understanding of the history of this land is grasped, enshrined and recorded. I think it is very, very important that we do that and it is very important that members on the other side put themselves in the shoes of our fellow Western Australians whose ancestors were on the receiving end of some very, very shocking conduct and were on the receiving end of the fact of settlement. As Hon Michael Mischin said, we are all here; we are Australians. We would not suggest that we are not part of this country, but we need to understand that that last couple of hundred years had some pretty extraordinary consequences that have led to intergenerational trauma that is still experienced today.

I will talk about one case, which is a complex case. In many ways people would see James Stirling as someone who made a significant contribution to the state. I certainly would not say that someone like James Stirling should be obliterated from history, but I do think that some of the complexities and consequences of the things that were done—not just by him; things done by what we might call the society and establishment of the day—should be properly recorded. But we do not have to go and rewrite history in total.

The Leader of the Government in the Legislative Council, Hon Sue Ellery, made a good point when she said that we need to find more complex ways of dealing with this and she referenced some of the very excellent materials at the War Memorial. I came across a conundrum in the Italian community in Naples because there is no doubt that Mussolini, the Italian dictator, oversaw and inspired some extraordinary architecture. After the war, in Naples, a decision had to be made on the piazza that Mussolini had created in his characteristic style, and it really was quite an extraordinary piece of architecture. The questions were: What should they do? Should they leave the piazza up as a testament to Mussolini or should they demolish it? They came up with the most extraordinary idea, which was they would name the piazza after the first political prisoner who he shot. The first Italian person who lost their life as a political opponent of Mussolini had their name enshrined on that piazza. I thought that was an incredibly

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sophisticated response to the problem of how we deal with these characters in history who, shall we say, probably did more harm than good, but, nevertheless, may have, in that process, created something that was quite extraordinary and that became part of the history.

There is a similar case in Western Australia. As I said, I am certainly not in favour of the tearing down of statutes and the removal of names when the person involved was very much part of the mainstream of the society of the time, but a number of people have recently brought to my attention the case of the Frank Hann National Park in the Great Western Woodlands. There is no doubt that Frank Hann was an extraordinary individual in many ways, and a most physically hardy person. He came out from England at a young age and settled in Queensland. I think he possibly went broke there, came over to WA and opened up vast tracts of Western Australia from Halls Creek all the way down to Laverton and through to the Great Western Woodlands, so one certainly could not argue that he was not a pretty extraordinary individual. But, at the same time, many of the stories surrounding him in its treatment of Aboriginal people are truly appalling.

Frank Hann's property was Lawn Hill in Queensland. Many diarists at the time remarked on the fact that at Lawn Hill he had 40 pairs of ears of the Waanyi people of that area nailed up as decorations, as trophies. There are many accounts of him going out of his way to collect heads for mates who wanted a trophy Aboriginal head. He even went to the extent of drying the heads out so they could form spittoons for people. In the history of the memories of Aboriginal people, this man was noted for having a really ruthless brutality towards Aboriginal people. He would treat captured Aboriginal women as slaves and chain them to trees until they became totally compliant. There are detailed recollections of rape, child molestation and just a great readiness to treat Aboriginal people as if they were as fair game as kangaroos.

This was a man who was operating in the latter half of the nineteenth century and I put it to members that even by the standards of his time, he was considered to have gone beyond the pale in that level of ruthless brutality. Indeed, around 1909, towards the latter part of his life, when he was giving an account in the newspapers of some of his affairs, it caused a huge furore of protest. Even by the standards of people in his own era, his conduct and his disregard and his view that Aboriginal people were largely to be tamed as if they were a species of native fauna was considered to be unacceptable. Therefore, the question is—I think people are raising this issue—is this the sort of person after whom we should name a national park? That national park was named in 1970. One would like to think that perhaps by then some of the sensibilities may have been more creative. After the Second World War, the Neapolitans had to find some creative ways of dealing with these sorts of issues and I think we need to do that, too.

I just want to reflect on the Australia Day issue because as an Australian, I feel very strongly about it. I do not like celebrating Australia Day on a day that makes a significant number of people deeply unhappy. I want an Australia Day that everyone can enjoy. I do not care whether it is moved by just one day. Even that one day would be a symbolic acknowledgement that the settlement we created in this land was not experienced equally by all of us and that a sacrifice was sustained by the Aboriginal people. I think it would be a mark of decency and respect to move it by a day or two to acknowledge that when we and our ancestors arrived here, it had an impact.

**Hon Alison Xamon** interjected.

**Hon ALANNAH MacTIERNAN:** That is right.

These things are evolutionary. The sensibilities of societies change, as they should. The national anthem is no longer *God Save the Queen*; it is now *Advance Australia Fair*, which says that our home is girt by sea. I would love for us to have another plebiscite on the national anthem. I would like it to be *I Am Australian*, which says, "We are one, but we are many. And from all the lands on earth we come". I think that would be a much better song. It would be a lot better than *Advance Australia Fair*. Of course societies evolve. We need to be mindful of those things and values that were good in the past, but we also have to understand, as we move forward, the consequences of our terra nullius approach to our settlement of this land and that it had an impact. We need to acknowledge that if we are going to move forward as a nation. Personally, I think it should be the subject of a referendum. I do not think it should be decided by politicians. I would like to see, in a few years' time, a referendum about Australia Day.

I think there is a growing sentiment in the community. I am not saying that at this time the majority of people want a change, but I think an increasing number of people do. It is not just a few fringe lefties with hairy armpits from down in Fremantle. I think this has become an issue of considerable significance to a lot of people. I think members would find that there is a great deal of support for that in the western suburbs and north of Fremantle. People want an Australia Day that does not have a negative connotation for our first Australians. We have seen the way in which people embraced Cathy Freeman. That superb story has been celebrated of late and shows that, fundamentally, the Australian community wishes the Aboriginal community well, wants to embrace it and see Aboriginal people go forward. Over time, I think we will see an increasing number of Australians who say that Australia Day should be celebrated on a day that represents them. That would be done quite reasonably and rightfully, and not out of some

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crazy sense of victimhood. As a community, I think we would get value from accepting that. Making a symbolic change to that date would be an extraordinary step forward.

I cannot support the motion. I think both Hon Sue Ellery and Hon Alison Xamon set out a powerful critique of it. I urge members to try to get our society together and not create faux wars.

**HON COLIN TINCKNELL (South West)** [2.44 pm]: I thank the honourable member for moving this motion. The debate has been different. I do not agree with all the views that have been presented. I was encouraged by Hon Alannah MacTiernan giving us some constructive ideas and having more of a constructive attitude towards this motion. That is exactly what it is all about.

Our culture and history are a part of who we are. This motion does not seek to deny Aboriginal culture or beat up on Aboriginal people. Like everyone else in this house, I think Hon Aaron Stonehouse understands how important they are to us. Every single culture in the world has had massacres, rapes and oppression as part of its history. Right through history, there is not a culture that I know of that has not had that. This motion refers to the vandalism of statues and monuments. I cannot see any members in here arguing with that. Hon Aaron Stonehouse has brought many positive things to our notice and asked for a debate on them. He has put this in a motion so that people can give their ideas and talk freely. That is part of our culture and part of who we are in this country.

People are the sum of their life experiences. Some experiences are good and some are bad, but they all contribute to making us the person we are. Nations are the same. Not all of our history is glorious. A lot of it is shameful and many things were done that were wrong. However, in its entirety, it has shaped us as a nation. We are a complex nation. I prefer to use the phrase multiracial nation rather than multicultural nation because I believe we should celebrate the things we have in common rather than the things that are different. I think too much is made of the things that are different. Of course we are all different! There are no two human beings in this world who have been brought up in the same way and are identical, other than maybe a few twins around the place. However, we spend a lot of time on our differences. I believe that Hon Aaron Stonehouse is saying that we should get rid of the things that divide us and move forward in a positive way. That we are a complex nation is something to be proud of. We have had some good things in our history and some bad things, but that is what we are.

Let us look at Aboriginal Australia. I believe we have missed a massive opportunity. It is not just recently that Australians have come to want something good for Aboriginal people. That feeling has been around for a long time. Hon Robin Chapple can correct me if I am wrong, but I think it was in 1967 when Australians voted overwhelmingly to give Aboriginal people the vote and include them in one of the most important things in a democracy. The year 1967 is a long time ago; even I was a young man then. Australians have overwhelmingly supported Aboriginal people. Unfortunately, our policies have failed us; that is a fact. Part of the problem is that one group always thinks it knows better than the others. Aboriginal people think they know how to solve their own problems, and whitefellas think they know how to solve those problems. However, like every other complex problem in society, we all need to put our heads together. Aboriginal people make up four per cent of this nation, so it is hard for them to put their voices forward. We are debating how to do that in the future. It will be a tough decision for the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, who is handling it right now. It will be an important move. As a white Australian who came here when I was 18 months old in 1955 as a brand-new Australian, I think I was very lucky. My mum and dad made a very smart decision to leave war-torn Europe and the United Kingdom and come to Australia. I can look at what my family has achieved; six of us came out here—four kids and mum and dad—but including the people whom I love and people whom I know, there are now hundreds of those people. It is amazing what we have been able to achieve. Here we are in this honourable house on the hill, talking about and debating all the important things that have happened in our nation. That comes about because of the freedoms of our nation that have come with our democracy and who we are as a people. It also comes with the history of our nation—some of it good and some of it bad. If we wipe that history, we are denying and hiding the mistakes we have made. We are not going to learn from them or help the younger people of our nation to learn from them if they are wiped. They will never know what was bad and they will make the same mistakes. We need to make sure that our history is always there.

It is a bit like the Italians, who have the wonderful Colosseum. They know that Christians being eaten by lions 3 000 years ago was not a good idea but I do not think the Italian government endorses it now. Will the government bring in bulldozers to take down the Colosseum? No, it will not. It is part of who they are. It is the sum of who they are as people and as a nation. They have learnt, over thousands, hundreds, and tens of years that that sort of behaviour is not great for nation-building. This western culture that we belong in has learnt those things, too. We have had slavery and so many things in our culture that have been wrong and we are correcting them as we go.

I want to mention a little bit about Christianity. I am a Christian, but people would probably not call me a churchgoing, religious, fervent Christian. In my time, I have learnt that Christian values are good. Not all the values are good, but Christian values preach acceptance and tolerance. They are the two parts of the Christian religion I have clung to as being important to me. Looking at the parliamentary system we have—I am sure Hon Aaron Stonehouse

Hon Aaron Stonehouse; Hon Sue Ellery; Hon Michael Mischin; Hon Alison Xamon; Hon Charles Smith; Hon Alannah MacTiernan; Hon Colin Tincknell; Hon Robin Chapple

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could tell us more about it than I can, because he loves his history in that area—I think of the kings and queens, and we had a dictator for a little while in the British Isles. All of a sudden, Parliaments were formed and a lot of mistakes were made along the way, but we learnt from those mistakes and now we have our wars or disagreements in a house like this. We can say things that others disagree with, but we are not shooting each other or chopping off each other's heads. All the hard work was done by people all those years ago. We should be proud of some of that history and acknowledge that the rest of it took place, even though it would not be the way we would approach it now, considering the attitudes of people today. I am happy that the Christian values I cling to are things I believe are very good for our society. I celebrate Passover, Hanukkah, Ramadan and Chinese New Year along with the people who invite me to celebrate them. When I go to foreign countries all over the world, I see that they really celebrate Christmas as well. They see it as something very important. It is a part of the world's history. The date that the whole world operates on is a Christian date. We all—every one of us on this planet—share Christian culture in some way.

**Hon Alannah MacTiernan:** There are some countries that use a different dating system.

**Hon COLIN TINCKNELL:** I know that, but, in the end, when they turn up to the United Nations, they work by the calendar that we work by as well. I am always looking at how to bring us together, not celebrate our differences. Our differences are always there. Like I said before, none of us are the same. When people go to other countries, they celebrate Christmas, so we should never be shy to celebrate Christmas here in any capacity. It is one of the great festivals of our culture. It is celebrated in not just Australia but also the United Kingdom, the United States, Canada, New Zealand, some other western nations and other nations all over the world where Christianity is part of the culture. They do not deny all the other parts of their cultures. In western democracies, especially the ones that have a Westminster-style Parliament, celebrating festivals is something they do freely and it is a great part of our history. We should make sure that we keep it alive.

Australia would not be the great nation we know without its history. We may not like it, but we cannot change all of it. We cannot change history; it is there. I think the approach taken in the Mussolini example was a great, creative idea. I am not suggesting that it would work in Australia, but the mindset was not just trying to cleanse history. We have already worked out in the past that trying to cleanse history does not work. If we ask the people of Cambodia about Mr Pol Pot, the people of Germany about Mr Hitler, or the people of Afghanistan about the trouble they are going through now with the Taliban, they will say that is what those people tried to do. They tried to cleanse history. Starting at year zero is not going to work.

I look at some of the rubbish on the internet and I really cannot believe just how ignorant people can be. Captain Cook was not a colonialist. He was an explorer. He was not a politician. He mapped one-third of the world; he did not have time for politics. He had botanists and amazing scientists on his ship when he sailed around the world. When he passed this way, he was on a mission to Tahiti to look at part of a celestial science experiment to measure the distance from the earth to the sun. It is ridiculous that people try to tie Captain Cook to colonialism and all that. He was an amazing explorer and should be celebrated for that.

People have been talking about changing a beer brand called “Colonial” because of its name. It is just ridiculous stuff. It is really wacko, loopy, left stuff and it should not be happening because it divides us. It does not bring us together and it is using a name as an excuse to pick an argument. As I said, people are the sum total of their life experiences and our nation is the sum total of its history. To deny our history is to deny who we are and it ignores both the good and the bad. We would not be who we are without acknowledging this. Even war is something we can be proud of. In the Second World War, we stood up against an evil Hitler, who was a tyrant. Wars are bad, but tough decisions had to be made. Who would want to wipe Churchill? He was not a perfect man, but he stood up and did the job that was asked of him by his country. Was he perfect? No. People got rid of him when they were in peacetime. They decided to move on so that they could have a better Prime Minister in peace. He did his job and we should not deny that. That is an important part of our nation's history and the history of similar nations.

I turn now to the Aboriginal issue. I see nothing in this motion that denies Aboriginal history. I often think that when we go to school, we find out how important maths, science and English are, but I cannot believe that Indigenous studies is not a compulsory part of education in our primary or high schools. We have an incredible culture amongst us, which is 40 000 or 60 000 years old—we are still finding out how old it is; it goes back a long way—and we should embrace it. Scientists and health practitioners are now finding cures to very complex medical matters due to the Aboriginal knowledge of some plants and other things. We have had some of that knowledge with Chinese medicine. We need to open up our eyes and hearts to Aboriginal people and not always think that we know best and that we have all the answers. Sometimes they can teach us about not only their culture, but also their kinship, the way they operate and the way that they share. It is a marvellous culture. A lot of it cannot work entirely in today's world because the world has moved on from much of that, but we should embrace Aboriginal culture and look at how we can bring parts of it into our way of life so that we can improve our way of life and make Australia truly something special in the world. I think we are already something special, but we can improve on that. I am open

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to change. I always have been. I am a monarchist, but I also believe that Australia will probably become a republic one day. Like all other people in this nation, I would accept the will of the people, and we should. We should always look to strive for them and make positive changes. The celebration of Australia Day on 26 January does not worry me, just so long as we really celebrate. Many of my followers would be disappointed if the date changed, but, like I said, I am open to change if it helps all Australia, not just one little group, and is not a way of appeasing one group. Like I said, we must always look at what is best for this nation as a whole. We should be celebrating the things that we have in common. We need to spend more time on that because there is so much to celebrate.

**HON ROBIN CHAPPLE (Mining and Pastoral)** [3.02 pm]: Interestingly enough, I found a lot of the contributions quite good value. I want to state, firstly, that when it comes to Aboriginal matters, I cannot speak on behalf of Indigenous people, but I can certainly speak in support of them. I am very mindful of the multicultural community that exists in Darwin, which is a really homogenous and brilliant community, and of the community of Broome to a large degree, although there are some issues there. I am also mindful of the comments made by the Leader of the House. How do we respect historic issues? That is really important. To deny historic issues is to deny reality. We are, after all, all Australians.

I am mindful of the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission. There could have been absolute slaughter in that country had Nelson Mandela not led the movement for a truth commission, which was not about vindictive reprisals, but about bringing together the community and identifying problems.

Some comments were made about Sir James Stirling and his time as Governor. In the past, I did some research and read some of his letters. There was one from the then Governor of the Kimberley who told Governor Stirling about Aboriginal people killing his sheep and wanting a permit to hunt them down. Stirling wrote back and said that he was sure that the Aboriginal people did not actually realise they were stealing someone's sheep. He said that they probably saw them as food and that the Governor of the Kimberley was on their country and that he should let them take his sheep. I think that is a really interesting insight from Governor Stirling.

I am mindful of the battle of the Lockyer family, an Aboriginal family who all went to the Second World War. Some of them did not come back. The Lockyer family fought a long and hard battle to erect a monument at Whim Creek on behalf of Aboriginal people. There was a lot of pushback. I am also mindful that the Shire of Carnarvon refused to fly the Aboriginal flag during NAIDOC Week. There is systemic racism out there. I am sorry if I get a little emotional, but I am also mindful of my foster child Martin, a Mayala boy who was a deaf-mute. He suicided because of racial attacks and vilification of his colour and the fact that he could not hear and could not speak. This is happening in the modern day; anyone who says any different denies reality.

I also had other foster children when I was in Yirrkala. We went into the township of Nhulunbuy one day and when the kids went into a shop, they were thrown out. I went in and said, "Can I bring in my kids?" The guy said of course I could. Those three young Aboriginal boys followed me into the shop and the shopkeeper asked, "Are they with you?" and I said, "Yes. They're my sons." That racism exists in this day and age.

I am also reminded of Canning, who is revered for establishing the Canning Stock Route. But do members know how he did it? He would chain up an Aboriginal man and woman and feed them salt until they led him to water. Then, compassionately, according to the records, he would "dispose" of them because they were on the wrong country and he did not want the other "natives" to kill them. That is some of our history and it has to be recognised. We should not be apportioning blame—I make that very, very clear—but it has to be recognised.

I did a lot of research and wrote a lengthy document a few years ago titled "The Flying Foam Massacre", which I am more than happy to table. In February 1868, there was a serious massacre.

**The ACTING PRESIDENT:** Member, I am required to interrupt you pursuant to temporary orders and extend an invitation to the mover of the motion to give his reply.

**Hon ROBIN CHAPPLE:** Could I seek leave to table this report "The Flying Foam Massacre"? It might be explanatory. Leave granted. [See paper [4314](#).]

**HON AARON STONEHOUSE (South Metropolitan)** [3.08 pm] — in reply: It is unfortunate that temporary orders have kicked in because I was listening with great interest to the historical lesson Hon Robin Chapple was giving us. I would like to thank Hon Alison Xamon for a speech that has given me something of substance that I can sink my teeth into and respond to. I think that perhaps I was not clear enough when I first spoke. I see these various, seemingly isolated, instances as an attack on our institutions. The best example of that is the way the debate around Australia Day has been framed, I suspect, not necessarily by Aboriginal people themselves but, rather, by race hustlers, race-baiters and people who want to foment division in our society. Instead of being a celebration of Australia and Australian values, it has been framed as a day of mourning and invasion. I think we can see when the attack on Australia as a country actually begins. As far as I am aware, no massacres or injustices occurred on 26 January 1788. They happened in the following days, perhaps.

**Extract from *Hansard***

[COUNCIL — Wednesday, 23 September 2020]

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Hon Aaron Stonehouse; Hon Sue Ellery; Hon Michael Mischin; Hon Alison Xamon; Hon Charles Smith; Hon Alannah MacTiernan; Hon Colin Tincknell; Hon Robin Chapple

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**Hon Colin Tincknell:** In the following years.

**Hon AARON STONEHOUSE:** In the following years, of course. Many injustices were committed across Australia's history, but nothing actually took place with the arrival of the First Fleet at Port Jackson in 1788. The date commemorates the beginning of British rule on the Australian continent. Of course, a lot of horrible things happened in the following years, but to lament the beginning of British rule on the Australian continent is to lament the creation of the colonies, which became the states, which eventually federated to become the country that we now know as Australia. To lament that is to lament the creation of Australia entirely and to say that Australia should not exist, which I think would be a great tragedy. It has been pointed out to me that if it were not for British explorers and the British settlers who arrived in Australia, Australia probably would have been settled by the French, the Dutch, or, if not a European colonial power, the Chinese or Japanese. I do not want to engage in a whataboutism-type logical fallacy, but we really are incredibly lucky to have inherited those British institutions that I mentioned earlier such as parliamentary democracy, freedom of speech and freedom of religion. All those hard-fought liberties came through the Magna Carta, the English Civil War and the Glorious Revolution. We managed to inherit that not through any merit of our own, but merely by being born in, or migrating to, a country that adopted those institutions from Britain.

Hon Alison Xamon said that she was not pro-vandalisation but she sympathised with those who are vandals.

**Hon Alison Xamon:** No, I said that I understood.

**Hon AARON STONEHOUSE:** The member understood the impulse to vandalise. I say to those who rather than engage in our democratic processes to change placenames or statues and instead take the law into their own hands and destroy property, that I think that is akin to ISIS destroying columns in Palmyra or the Taliban destroying statues of Buddha in Afghanistan. It is that same kind of reckless destruction of history regardless of what the will of the majority of people might happen to be. It is funny to hear the Greens say that because I remember listening to a radio segment on the ABC in June this year with Australian Greens Senator Rachel Siewert who was talking about how we needed to tear down all these terrible statues of people such as John Septimus Roe or Governor Stirling because they are insulting to Aboriginal Western Australians. The next caller on the line after her on ABC radio was an Aboriginal elder. I do not recall her name, I am sorry. She said, "We don't want to tear down statues. No, we don't want to rename things. Those are European statues and European names; you can keep those. We'd like to have some things named after our own regions." Aboriginal people would not use the names of individuals, perhaps, because there are cultural reasons why they do not mention the names or create statues or images of dead people. The Aboriginal elder was completely at odds with the Greens senator who presumed to speak on behalf of Aboriginal Western Australians. I am glad to hear that Hon Robin Chapple does not presume to speak on their behalf. Of course, he likes to raise issues.

*Division*

Question put and a division taken, the Acting President (Hon Adele Farina) casting her vote with the noes, with the following result —

*Ayes (13)*

Hon Jim Chown  
Hon Peter Collier  
Hon Donna Faragher  
Hon Nick Goiran

Hon Rick Mazza  
Hon Michael Mischin  
Hon Robin Scott  
Hon Tjorn Sibma

Hon Charles Smith  
Hon Aaron Stonehouse  
Hon Dr Steve Thomas  
Hon Colin Tincknell

Hon Ken Baston (*Teller*)

*Noes (20)*

Hon Martin Aldridge  
Hon Jacqui Boydell  
Hon Robin Chapple  
Hon Tim Clifford  
Hon Alanna Clohesy

Hon Colin de Grussa  
Hon Sue Ellery  
Hon Diane Evers  
Hon Adele Farina  
Hon Laurie Graham

Hon Colin Holt  
Hon Alannah MacTiernan  
Hon Kyle McGinn  
Hon Martin Pritchard  
Hon Samantha Rowe

Hon Matthew Swinbourn  
Hon Dr Sally Talbot  
Hon Darren West  
Hon Alison Xamon  
Hon Pierre Yang (*Teller*)

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*Pair*

Hon Simon O'Brien

Hon Stephen Dawson

Question thus negatived.