

**DIRK HARTOG ISLAND — FRENCH CLAIM COMMEMORATION**

*Statement by Member for Thornlie*

**MR C.J. TALLENTIRE (Thornlie)** [12.27 pm]: I was honoured to attend the commemoration of the 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the French claim to the western part of the Australian continent made on 30 March 1772. The claim was made on Dirk Hartog Island at Turtle Bay by Commander Louis de Saint Aloüarn and crew members from the ship *Gros Ventre*. I was at the site of the claim and connected by Zoom and satellite to a conference at the Alliance Française de Perth. The *Gros Ventre* arrived on the WA coast near Cape Leeuwin on 17 March 1772, but bad weather prevented crew coming ashore. The ship sailed north, rounded Cape Inscription and entered Turtle Bay on the evening of 29 March. On 30 March, de Saint Aloüarn sent a landing party to claim possession in the name of King Louis XV. When news of the claim reached Versailles in the 1770s, it was not progressed. In the journals of the *Gros Ventre* crew members, the following comments are recorded. Sergeant Lafortune said, “We learned that New Holland is inhabited”. Sub Lieutenant de Rosily said, “On land, we saw a lot of smoke in one place. We fired one shot from our gun and saw smoke in other places and thicker. We concluded that some inhabitants were signalling to us.” How these and other comments were received by decision-makers in France is an area worthy of further research, especially in relation to the philosophical respect for traditional cultures held by some advisers to the royal court in The Age of Enlightenment. The full story of de Saint Aloüarn’s voyage is documented in the Western Australian Museum’s 2008 publication *1772: The French annexation of New Holland: The tale of Louis de Saint Aloüarn* by Philippe Godard and Tugdual de Kerros.