

**WORLD WAR II — VICTORY IN THE PACIFIC DAY
VIETNAM VETERANS DAY**

Statement by Minister for Veterans

MR J.M. FRANCIS (Jandakot — Minister for Veterans) [2.10 pm]: Last Saturday, 15 August, marked the seventieth anniversary of Victory in the Pacific Day, which brought an end to the Second World War. The Second World War was one of the greatest struggles of the twentieth century. The Japanese surrender on 15 August 1945 brought peace to the world after six years of war, of which the cost in human lives was unimaginable. Almost a million Australians, both men and women, served in the Second World War. At its height in August 1943, Australia had 732 000 men and women under arms—more than 10 per cent of the total population. Australians fought in campaigns against Nazi Germany and fascist Italy in Europe, the Mediterranean and North Africa, as well as against Imperial Japan in South-East Asia and other parts of the Pacific.

The war in the Pacific brought the conflict to our very doorstep. Following the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, Australia's major focus shifted from supporting the Allies in Europe and the Middle East to the south west Pacific. From Western Australia, more than 61 500 men enlisted, which, remarkably, represented more than 13 per cent of the total population. This meant Western Australia had the highest enlistment rate of any state. More than 39 000 Australians died during the war. This included nearly 4 000 from Western Australia, whose names are forever remembered in the inner chamber below the State War Memorial. There are now about 2 300 Western Australian veterans from the Second World War who are still with us today. Although their ranks may be diminishing, their legacy and recognition of the price they paid for our freedom is strong. They may have indeed been the “greatest generation”, seared by the Great Depression and tested by the forces of oppression whose evil and desire for world dominance knew no bounds.

In closing, today, 18 August, is Vietnam Veterans Day, which marks the forty-ninth anniversary of the Battle of Long Tan. After Afghanistan, the Vietnam War was Australia's second longest involvement in any war. Almost 60 000 Australians served in Vietnam from July 1962 until our phased withdrawal throughout 1973. Five hundred and twenty-one Australians died, including more than 60 from Western Australia, and over 3 000 were wounded. Our servicemen who fought in Vietnam were prepared to die for their fellow Australians. We have honoured and recognised all Australian service men and women in every war before and after Vietnam for that very same reason. Vietnam should be no different.

Lest we forget.