

WESTERN AUSTRALIAN VICTORIA CROSS AND GEORGE CROSS RECIPIENTS

Statement by Minister for Veterans

MR J.M. FRANCIS (Jandakot — Minister for Veterans) [12.10 pm]: Mr Speaker, I will start by acknowledging the presence in your gallery of Royal Navy cadets and Royal Marine cadets from the United Kingdom who are visiting Western Australia and who will take part in the centenary of the Anzac commemorations in Perth on Saturday. Welcome to Western Australia.

[Applause.]

Mr J.M. FRANCIS: Mr Speaker, as part of the Western Australian government's centenary of Anzac initiatives, my office has produced a booklet entitled "This Gallant Company of Brave Men", which is about Western Australia's 17 Victoria Cross and two George Cross recipients. Of our 17 Victoria Cross recipients who were either born in Western Australia or who enlisted in Western Australia, one fought in the Second Boer War, 10 fought in the Great War, five fought in the Second World War and one fought in the war in Afghanistan. Both of our GC recipients fought in the Second World War. Our Victoria Cross and George Cross recipients are extraordinary men who came from varied backgrounds with different life experiences. I refer to Private O'Meara, VC, who laboured for four days with both casualties and vital stores while displaying awe-inspiring gallantry and cheerfulness in the hellish and nightmarish fields of Pozieres. I refer also to George Gosse, GC, who displayed cool daring whilst defusing volatile German mines in Bremen and to Benjamin Roberts-Smith, VC, MG, who displayed a determined and professional application of his trade in Afghanistan. To date, no member of the Royal Australian Navy has been awarded the Victoria Cross, but it is too easily forgotten that of the nine Australian servicemen who were awarded the George Cross, four were serving with the RAN, with two of those being Western Australian. This booklet will hopefully remind readers that George Cross recipients stand in the front ranks of Australian heroes. Through publications like this one, it is desired that Western Australians will gain a greater understanding and stronger appreciation of those who served and the stories behind them.

Members may be interested to know that I will be sending a copy of the booklet to every member of this house and the Legislative Council, as well as to every school and council in the state. I record thanks to my office staff for the work they did in compiling this booklet. In particular, I thank my chief of staff, Stephen Barton, Donald Gibbs and Peta Arbuckle, MVO, from the Department of the Premier and Cabinet.