

HARMONY WEEK

Statement by Member for Mount Lawley

MR S.A. MILLMAN (Mount Lawley — Parliamentary Secretary) [12.55 pm]: I rise today in the spirit of Harmony Week, which is celebrated this week. It is a time to recognise and celebrate Australia's cultural diversity, and to promote inclusivity, respect and a sense of belonging for all members of our society. I would like to commend the exemplary efforts of Dr Tony Buti, Minister for Citizenship and Multicultural Interests, and Paul Papalia, Minister for Police. Their unwavering dedication to fostering harmony and inclusivity within our communities in a way that promotes community safety deserves recognition. Alongside the rest of the Cook Labor government, their commendable endeavours in promoting dialogue, understanding and tolerance are particularly noteworthy, especially considering the challenges that we currently confront.

I commend the courage and resilience of the federal member for Perth, Hon Patrick Gorman, and the federal member for Cowan, Hon Dr Anne Aly, who are champions for inclusivity and multiculturalism. They have been victims of harassment and intimidation at community events by those who seek to silence their voices and undermine the democratic process. These appalling acts of harassment and intimidation by individuals in our community are propelled by a sweeping wave of a contemptuous disregard for the principles we celebrate this week, a disregard driven by hate and extremist ideologies. It is unacceptable that our respected leaders are targeted in such a manner and undermines social cohesion. In a time when we should be fostering unity, understanding and inclusivity, we find ourselves wrestling with a tiny minority that sows a cacophony of discord and division. Instead of embracing diversity as our strength, we witness prejudice and discrimination. Rather than nurturing dialogue and empathy, we see polarisation and animosity.

It is incumbent upon all of us to promote and practice harmony and understanding. We must face difficult conversations with respect. We must challenge harmful stereotypes. We must stand in solidarity with those who are marginalised or oppressed. I stand before members today to call for the voice of moderation as we stare down extremists and hate. Let us not allow the dissonance of conflict to drown out the harmony that we strive to create. Together, let us work towards a future in which diversity is celebrated, differences are respected and unity prevails.