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Member : Mr STONE

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Mr STONE (Chief Minister) (by leave): Mr Speaker, I move that this House acknowledge the debt of gratitude owed to all those who, at home and abroad, contributed to the Allied victory in the Pacific 50 years ago, recognising that their sacrifices remain the foundation for the peace and friendship that the people of our region enjoy today.

Mr Speaker, I make my speech from the dispatch box for the very simple reason that this is probably one of the most important motions that this Chamber will ever pass. This parliament, apart from Tasmania, is the only one sitting today in Australia. Thus, we have been afforded a unique opportunity to pay tribute in a formal way on a sitting day. I believe that every member in this Chamber will agree that it is most appropriate that the Northern Territory parliament is sitting on this day, the 50th anniversary of victory in the Pacific.

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Because of its location, Darwin was central to Australia's war effort in the Pacific. Because of that location, the energy of Territorians, and initiatives taken by this parliament, Darwin and the Northern Territory are now central to Australia's peaceful push into Asia through trade and commerce, cultural links and ties of friendship.

As we all know, Darwin was the only Australian capital city to have suffered repeated and sustained enemy attacks during World War II, or any other war for that matter. In fact, this Parliament House is built on the site of one of the primary targets in the first raid on 19 February 1942. A plaque on the floor of the main hall, just outside this Chamber, marks the spot where an enemy bomb fell on the Darwin Post Office, killing 10 people, including 9 telegraphists at their posts as they tried to relay news of the attack to southern Australia. Three members of one family - the postmaster, Hurtle Bald, his wife, Alice, and daughter, Iris - were killed by that

bomb and are now buried with so many others at Adelaide River War Cemetery. Because of the fate of families like the Balds, we cannot forget that more than the combatants were casualties. The Balds, like members of the young Mullen and Stasinowsky families, were telegraphists working for the Post Master General's Department, very much a behind-the-lines civilian job even with war raging in Europe. However, on 19 February 1942, those telegraphists found that they were in a war zone only minutes before they were killed.

They represent the tens of thousands of people whose age, disability or occupation dictated that they would stay in Australia and help the war effort from the home front. It was the weapons and ammunition, the fuel, transport vehicles and technical services collectively supplied by the civilians that allowed those on the front line to do their job so effectively. Therefore, it is fitting that this parliament, in session in Darwin, not only acknowledge the contribution of those who fought, suffered and died in the war 50 years ago, but also pay tribute to the civilians, war workers, women and children who suffered both at home and abroad, and so contributed to victory in the Pacific. We also recognise that those who paid the supreme sacrifice in war laid the foundations for the peace, prosperity and friendship now enjoyed in most areas in the region to our immediate north.

The toll levied on Australia by the conflict in the Pacific was heavy. This nation of only 7 million people mobilised almost a million people in World War II, and lost 39 366 in actual combat. In the Pacific, nearly 11 000 Australians were killed in action or died of wounds. Another 14 000 were wounded but survived through their own determination and the medical services made available on the front lines. More than 22 000 were taken prisoner, the majority of those at the fall of Singapore. In one of the most shameful chapters of the war, nearly 8000 of those prisoners were murdered or died of disease and malnutrition.

I do not intend to dwell on the horrors suffered by so many thousands on the battlefields reaching from Darwin to Iwo Jima, nor on the more horrific atrocities of the prisoner of war camps, the civilian internment compounds, the death marches and the slave labour camps. This has been chronicled in all its atrocious detail over the past 50 years and revisited by the major media this week. Suffice it to say that the Australians who fought and died in the Pacific theatre were at least necessarily involved in war in that our military did not mobilise in the Pacific as an extension of some aggressive foreign policy. There were no ifs or buts as there were during the Great War whenAustralian soldiers were heavily involved on distant battlefields in Europe, the Middle East and North Africa or, more recently, in South-East Asia.

Australia mobilised for the Pacific theatre to answer the naked aggression

highlighted by the names Pearl Harbour, Singapore, Batavia and Darwin itself. The mobilisation was total, particularly on Territory cattle stations, Aboriginal communities and towns the length and breadth of the track. All were called to help the war effort. To quote from the Battle of Australia document produced to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the Bombing of Darwin:

The raids of 19 February led to a repositioning of armed forces in the region; Adelaide River was further
developed to become a huge base for Australian and American headquarters, hospitals and logistic support,
including army farms. Darwin itself ... became a fortress area.

The navy assumed defensive responsibility for Darwin, and the army the coastal defences at East Point along with the West Point and Waugite batteries on the Cox Peninsula. Camps were rapidly established adjacent to the north-south road, and airstrips were developed to take the RAAF and USAAF bombers and fighters. Alice Springs became the railhead and supply base for the north, with Birdum, Mataranka and Katherine providing storage and engineering facilities.

The Northern Australian Observers Unit, the `Nackeroos' or `Curtin's Cowboys', formed in mid-1942 under the anthropologist Major W.E.H. Stanner, carried out surveillance of the desolate coastline from remote and dangerous camps. Their job was an unenviable one. Alone and outnumbered, they were to be the first line of defence in the event of an invasion. Curtin's Cowboys were a forerunner to today's Norforce, comprised of volunteers from the men and women of
north Australia with expert training from army regulars. The report continues:

They are ably assisted by the Aborigines, however, as was the entire war effort to a large extent. Tiwi
Islanders formed a patrol under Lt John Gribble RANR, an ex-missionary, and the local Aborigines on
Cox Peninsula formed a `Black Watch' under Superintendent Jack Murray; they were responsible for
rescuing a number of downed Allied pilots, whilst elsewhere the Aborigines provided valuable services to
the pastoral industry, and military and civilian authorities - all for payment in kind or coin and with
little recognition.

The Tiwi Islands were between Darwin and the enemy. Their location north of Darwin produced the ideal site
for coast watchers and radio direction finding (RDF, later radar) facilities. Initial warnings of the
incoming Japanese attack against Darwin on 19 February 1942 were provided by

Lt John Gribble and
Father John McGrath of the Bathurst Island Mission. Alan Stubbs, a RAAF LAC, operated a coast watch radio
under the `8x2' callsign until the installation of No 38 RDF station in August 1942; he lived with the
local Aborigines who provided food to supplement his rations. The RAAF utilised Bathurst Island Mission
airstrip and developed another at Snake Bay on the adjacent Melville Island, whilst the Navy operated
patrol craft from the islands.

The Tiwis are probably best remembered for their role in providing coast watch services as the Gribble
Patrol; a number served aboard submarines and as pilots

for naval craft, whilst Mathias Ngapiatiliwai is remembered for his capture of the Japanese pilot
Hajime Toyoshima following a forced landing after the 19 February 1942 raids. Mathias, familiar with cowboy
films at the Star Theatre, used a Hopalong Cassidy routine to make the Japanese flyer raise his
hands - not at gunpoint, but at spearpoint.

We have relived those years, and paid tribute to those who fought and died in the very successful Bombing of Darwin commemoration during 1992. The individual initiatives of Territorians, such as Toni Kelly and her committee which organised a reunion of ex-service women in Darwin earlier this year, have been among the most successful chapters in the Australia Remembers program. Another success story is the Back to the Track convoy. I would like to welcome the 150 participants, many of them veterans of the track in the old days, to today's Darwin and a far better road system than was available on previous visits. I was greatly privileged to attend the tattoo on Sunday night, as I know a number of other members of this Assembly did, to witness a spectacular performance by the Darwin Symphony Orchestra and to see cadets from 3 services, navy, army and air force, participate in what could only be described as one of the most professional tattoos I have ever seen. I congratulate them and all those who ensured the success of that evening.

One major omission until now from the list of those who contributed to the war effort has been the cost to the civilian populations of countries overrun by the enemy - from the island chains, starting from Papua New Guinea, taking in the Indonesian Archipelago and the Philippines, Peninsula Malaysia and Borneo, right

up to Indochina and China itself. Although the photographs of Damien Parer and the stories of the diggers themselves brought home to Australia the efforts of the PNG porters and stretcher bearers on the Kokoda Trail, the fate of many others in South-East Asia has been largely overlooked or underreported.

The sacrifice of the people of East Timor is now slowly starting to be recognised, and not before time. In giving aid to the beleaguered Australian commandos of various special force groups, including the legendary Z-Force itself, Timorese civilians paid with their lives in their thousands. Going by the testimony that is now coming to light from Timorese families who live in Darwin, those lives were taken in the most brutal and horrific manner. The Ambonese lent similar aid to the commandos of Gull Force, and also paid the Japanese price for aiding the Australian enemy. Recently, in Ambon, I took the time to visit the Commonwealth war cemetery in that city. It is a chilling reminder of what occurred in the Province of Maluku during its time of occupation. After the Australians were overrun by the vastly more numerous enemy forces, and the commandos were killed or captured and the remnants evacuated, the local populations of Ambon and Timor were left to the mercy of a merciless conqueror for 3 long years. Similar atrocities were visited on the indigenous populations of British North Borneo, Labuan, Malaysia and Singapore itself.

Whatever hardships were suffered in Australia and in the Darwin front line, at least our people stayed in Allied hands. Today is a fitting day to remember those who supported our cause, gave aid to our soldiers, sailors and airmen, and paid the price in horrifically large numbers in those years between the enemy attack and the successful Allied counterattack of 1944-45.

We should look at where we were in the Asia Pacific region 50 years ago today and where we are now. The winds of change were gusting through South-East Asia before and during the war. There was not an independent nation between the Timor Sea and Thailand as colonial domination in South-East Asia, as in many parts of the globe, was the accepted order of the day. As hostilities drew to a close, freedom or patriotic forces were aggressively demanding independence from the colonial powers in Indochina, Malaysia, the Philippines and the East Indies. The end of the war against Japan marked the start of new battles, aggressive negotiation and a series of nation-building exercises that dramatically changed the colour of the map in our entire region.

In the postwar era, the winds of change were blowing a gale, but peace meant Darwin itself had lost its pre-eminence as the main garrison on Australia's front line. Its prewar civilian population was scattered, and its military residents were about to be demobilised and follow suit. Luckily, many of the civilians came back

to start again, particularly the old families - the Lew-Fatts, Ah Mats, Litchfields, Bonsons, Perrons, Ah Toys, Croker Island kids and many others. Whilst massive change swept throughSouth-East Asia, Darwin grappled with limited economic, social and political development at the whim of the central government mandarins in Canberra. However, the ordinary men and women of Darwin developed new contacts with South-East Asia, forging small but important links through family ties, economic contacts and tourism. This knowledge of Asia and direct contact through the people of Darwin put Territorians in a prime position to harness the winds of change in our region when self-government allowed us to make our own decisions and shape our own destiny. That was as recently as 1978.

The development of our ties with Asia over the past 2 decades is a matter of record. I believe these commercial and cultural links, these ties of friendship, are a fitting legacy of the hundreds of thousands of people on the battle front and the unnamed thousands, civilians of all nationalities, who died helping the cause, or through deprivation and disease or simply by being caught in the crossfire. As we were reminded very poignantly recently, freedom comes at a price.

There are, of course, the tens of thousands of people at home who supported the war effort - the Aboriginal coast watchers, munition workers and women of the land army, as well as the service women who were so well-represented at the Darwin reunion only a month or so ago. In particular, there were the men and women of Darwin who braved the bombs and returned afterwards to work to make Darwin the prosperous multicultural city we see around us today - a city that is leading the way in establishing peaceful ties throughout the theatre of war 50 years on.

I would like to extend the appreciation of members to the Northern Territory Australia Remembers Committee for the outstanding job it has done in recognising the veterans. It is to be congratulated. I have attended a number of events that the committee organised. It has operated in a very professional manner. I congratulate Bob Alford and his committee on what has been done. I also congratulate the federal government on this initiative. It is an important one that cuts across party political lines. It is fitting that, 50 years on, this nation should accord that recognition. Sadly, as was observed on radio this morning, when we come to the 75th commemoration, it is most unlikely that many of those veterans will be there.

Another observation was made that we should be grateful for having achieved 50 years of peace. We have not achieved 50 years of peace. I reflect on other conflicts that have occurred over those years. I think particularly of the Malaysian

emergency, Korea, Vietnam and the horrific tales that are being told through our media of what is occurring now in the Balkans. I ask myself why, after the Second World War, people in the west said in relation to Germany that it would never happen again. It is happening again. It is happening not only in the Balkans, but also in Africa and elsewhere around the globe. There is a lesson in all of that. It is that the world needs to be vigilant. There may not have been another world war in the last 50 years, but there is always the capacity for that type of global conflict to occur again. It is important that our children and those who come after them recognise the great sacrifice that people made to bring peace in their lifetime. I urge support for the motion.

Mr EDE (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, I rise to support the motion. I would like to add my thanks and admiration for the work that has been done throughout the year as part of the Australia Remembers commemoration. I thank those people up and down the track and throughout the Territory who have worked hard to make it a success. This day used to be called `Victory over Japan Day' and is beginning to be called `Victory in the Pacific Day'. I think the people who fought and died in Burma would dispute the geographic accuracy of that.

I believe 3 elements are very significant in relation to this day. The first is that of remembrance and honouring those who passed on. The second is that it is time to say thank you. The third is that it is a time to look forward. Firstly, today, we remember the work and the suffering of the generation which was born in or soon after the First World War. Many of their families had been blighted by that war. That generation grew up in the Great Depression and fought in the Second World War, whether by holding a rifle or by keeping the troops supplied and working in the factories. Today, we remember and honour a generation of selfless heroes. Today, we remember greatness. Today, we remember friendship, comradeship and mateship.

Many of us will recall today the stories of our youth, because the majority of us in this House are of the baby boomer generation whose parents are the ones to whom I refer. As a young boy, I remember being inspired by the accounts of what happened at that time and by the stories that people told, not about themselves but about what their mates and others had done. It was always somebody reciting the brave deeds of others, of friends of theirs. I recall being inspired by the bravery of our troops and thrilled by their exploits. It imbued in me a belief in what we could achieve. I felt that, if those few people were able to achieve so much against such enormous odds, surely I could achieve something. In recent times, often I have heard on radio or read in newspapers of people asking why the baby boomer generation believed that it could change the world. In my view, that belief did not burst forth from nothing. It came from the fact that we were brought up hearing of the greatness that can be achieved, hearing of the things that our parents did, knowing that these achievements were possible and believing that great things

could be done. It is possibly too early to pass judgment - I hope it is - on my generation but, when I look at the achievements of my generation and the achievements of my parent's generation ...

Mr Stone: It does not compare, does it?

Mr EDE: As the Chief Minister says, it does not compare.

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In our 20s and 30s, my generation was quick to pass judgment on that generation as old fogies who should be pushed aside because we had the new means to change the world. When we look at what our parents achieved in terms of war and peace, we must take our hats off to them because they were the ones who achieved.

As well as a time for remembrance and honouring, today is a time to say thank you to those who died, making the ultimate sacrifice for their country and their beliefs, and also to those who suffered, whether in Australia or overseas. I remark on those people who stayed in Australia, who worked selflessly on the land, in factories and in offices to provide the wherewithal to maintain that fighting machine. I am not referring only to Australians, whether they be Aboriginal or non-Aboriginal Australians, but to all of our allies.

We look at the numbers of people who died and were wounded among the Australian forces. Given the size of our population, it was horrendous. That followed World War I, during which, on a per capita basis, we had lost more people than any other participating nation. However, that should not blind us to the incredible losses experienced in other countries. Over that period, 35 million people died in China. People died in their millions, and not only on the mainland but right across South-East Asia, including the Philippines and Indonesia, and our near neighbours in Papua New Guinea. It included people from outside the region, from the United States, Britain, Holland and other forces who fought in this area. It included the people of East Timor who did not need to become involved and who would possibly not have been involved had Australia not gone in there. They rose selflessly to support and assist our forces. In the end, they suffered more casualties than all of Australia in that conflict. We remember them. We remember those who died in all of those forces. We remember them and we thank them.

It is not right that this matter is brought forward only on the 50th anniversary. While Anzac Day has become a time for old mates and others to get together, in my view it has not done enough to imbue in our children's generation a knowledge of what their grandparents - our parents - did during that period. It has not yet done enough to effect that transference of knowledge, what might be called the transference of that tribal ideal and belief in Australia and in what Australians are

capable of. That is what we must work towards today. We must work towards ensuring that our children know what our parents did. In terms of our own achievements, we are unable to show anything that matches what our parents did, but we must put forward that message for the sake of our children and for the sake of the nation.

Mr Speaker, I seek the leave of the House to pause to enable honourable members to join in a period of silence being observed at this time right around Australia, and I request the indulgence of the House to allow me continue my remarks after that observance.

Leave granted.

Mr SPEAKER: Honourable members, I understand that, at this time, 2 minutes silence is being observed across the nation to give all Australians an opportunity to reflect on peace in Australia. I invite honourable members and visitors in the galleries to stand and observe 2 minutes silence in tribute, on the 50th anniversary of the victory in the Pacific, to all Australians who died during World War II, those who served under arms and those who worked privately to sustain the war effort at home.

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Members stood in silence.

Mr EDE: Mr Speaker, as I said, this is a time of remembrance, a time to say thank you and a time to look forward. We must look forward with a knowledge of the past. I make the point that, if our children do not know the great deeds that our parents performed, how will they know what they themselves are capable of? If they are not aware of the heights to which people can rise and what they can achieve in times of adversity, when the challenge is presented to them in peace, how will they know how far they themselves can go and what they are able to achieve?

What do we hope for and expect for the Pacific? As the Chief Minister observed, war did not cease on 15 August 1945. What we call the Second World War ceased, but conflict continued unabated in Vietnam and Indonesia, and it flared into a major war in Korea. Despite all that, the moves in the Pacific have been positive and towards peace. I believe that the economic progress that is taking place in the region is leading to greater understanding and stronger demands for basic human rights. There is a belief that the expansion of trade and development in the region will lead to greater emphasis on the human rights that we hold so dear. In this, Australia has been a leader, as has Japan. However, many people remain deeply concerned at the Japanese government's reluctance to apologise for the

atrocities of that period. They fear that history may repeat itself because, as a nation, Japan does not appear to accept that it acted wrongly. Groups are calling on the Japanese government to make that statement in order to ensure that Japanese children learn the truth of those events during their education. By that means, while we ensure that our children know the truth of what our parents did, Japanese children will know also that their people were totally led astray and that great atrocities were carried out during that period. They can commit themselves to ensure that does not occur again.

What about ourselves? As I said, most of us are part of that group called the baby boomers. I have heard others refer to us as the `selfish generation'. The point has been made very strongly that we have given our children fear of nuclear holocaust, fear of unemployment and a world that appears to be devoid of fixed values, swamped by drugs and inured to violence. We have created a world where children grow up fearful of change and full of self-doubt. Are we inculcating in them values that will enable them when the time comes, hopefully in peace rather than war, to rise to the heights to which their grandparents rose? I fear that, while our children will recall particular individuals, there will be no 50th anniversary for our generation unless we start now to do some great things. At this stage, we have done nothing to mark ourselves as worthy successors to our parents.

We have seen and heard our parents, but we have not understood the power of commitment and the strength of selflessness. We must take the opportunity now to revisit our parents' generation. We need to sit down with them and our children, and ask our parents' generation to repeat what they were saying about maintaining and enhancing peace, and balancing our own needs with the common good. We need to see that pursuing the greater good is a worthy pursuit. Together with our children, let us promise to strive to achieve the great heights and the levels of commitment that our parents' generation displayed in both peace and war.

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Mr SETTER (Jingili): Mr Speaker, I feel very humble standing here today and speaking in this debate. This is a very significant time for Australia. It is 50 years since the end of the Second World War. It is appropriate that Australia has chosen to commemorate this day with ceremonies all around the country. Indeed, a group of returned service men travelled up the track in old vehicles to commemorate the horrendous drive that they had to undertake week after week. I am reminded of the expression that the RSL uses every Anzac Day at the end of the ceremony: `Lest we forget'. We should never forget the sacrifices of those who fought for us, and for everything that we believe in and hold dear.

I never cease to be amazed at the commitment and sacrifice of those young men and women who went off to war. Most were very young indeed. Most volunteered.

Many served overseas, although probably more served at home. They left their jobs, homes, families and security to do what they could to defend their country and their lifestyle, and they did it very successfully. Many of them paid the ultimate price. The newspaper that was circulated in the Chamber a short while ago showed that 27 073 youngAustralians were killed in action or died as prisoners of war. Considering Australia's population during World War II, a significant proportion of the cream of Australia's youth was wiped out of existence. The deprivation that those men and women had to suffer is unbelievable, not only in fighting in the field but also, for many of them, in prisoner-of-war camps.

Unlike the Leader of the Opposition, I am not a baby boomer. I was a young child when World War II started, and my memories of those days remain vivid. I grew up in north Queensland, probably as close as one could be to the war in terms of Australia's civilised areas. I grew up just south of Cairns, and my earliest memories are of wondering what was happening when men in uniform passed through our town. It did not take long for me to work out what was happening. When you have to live with it for several years, you soon come to understand the implications. When I was 3 or 4 years old, my family was evacuated to the coastal plain adjacent to Cairns. The children went to the Atherton Tablelands and spent the next 18 months or so there, whilst the men who, for whatever reason, were unable to volunteer, remained where they were.

I went on to a primary school in my little home town. I remember vividly the exercises that we used to undertake as primary school children. Adjacent to the school but 100 m or more away, under some very large mango trees, dozens of slit trenches had been dug. At least once a week, the school bell would ring at any time of the day and we all had to leave our classrooms, race down the stairs and out into the slit trenches. Each of us was allocated a place in a particular trench with a group of other students. We had to keep our heads down and remain there until the bell rang again. This procedure was complemented by the fairly regular sounding of the siren that was located at the police station. Japanese aircraft were sighted frequently over north Queensland's towns and, when that occurred, the siren would sound and out we would go into the slit trenches.

Mr Burke: How old were you?

Mr SETTER: I started school when I was 5. I would have been about 5 or 6.

Another feature of life at that time was the blackout. The windows of people's houses were painted black and the blinds were drawn every night. No light was allowed to be shown.

That was how we lived. Volunteer wardens patrolled the streets and, if a light was seen where a blind was not fully drawn, the warden would knock on your door and demand that the light be covered or switched off.

I remember vividly the way that my mother had to cope with purchasing food, clothing and the other essentials by using ration coupons. Each month, every family was given a book of coupons for food. The coupons entitled the family to buy so many pounds of butter, sugar, flour and meat, and clothing etc. If you ran out of coupons, that was it. You went hungry. Many were the days when we sat down to a meal of bread, milk and sugar, and I must say that it was not bad either. We would chop the dry bread into little squares, place it in a porridge plate or a soup plate, pour milk over it and sprinkle it with sugar. That was it.

Mr Burke: What about the dripping?

Mr SETTER: Yes, bread and dripping with a pinch of salt on top. It was not bad and I have had it many times.

A company of Australian engineers was located in our home town. They practised constructing bridges from their pontoon boats on the Mulgrave River just south of Cairns for 12 months or so. Another very interesting experience was having the 503rd American Parachute Brigade located in our town for over 12 months. A couple of thousand members of the brigade were camped in the park. They cleared an area and erected a very large camp just out of town. Those were great days for young people like me because chocolate and chewing gum flowed freely. We did very well, as did all the business people. The sudden influx of a couple of thousand servicemen into the town was a wonderful experience. For years afterwards, my proudest possession was a little peaked cap that had a blue badge with a white parachute on the side and silver braid around it. I kept that until it fell apart many years later. Those American servicemen were great guys. We all welcomed them into our homes. They were made to feel part of the community.

Another very interesting experience I recall was with my uncle who would take me on his pushbike when I was a little tot. He had a lady's pushbike. He would pedal a short distance out of town and, almost every day, the Americans would be practising their parachute jumps into a vacant cane paddock. Twenty or 30 DC3s would fly nose to tail at a low altitude, and the sky would be full of parachutes tumbling down in their hundreds. As soon as they hit the ground, the troops would gather in their parachutes and drive back to Cairns to do it all over again. Those are the types of experiences I carry with me from those days. Those men dropped into the Markham Valley, just north of Lae. Later, I believe that group was dropped on the Butuan Peninsula in the Philippines. Most of them did not make it.

Mr Speaker, as you can imagine, World War II has been a special interest of mine.

I have read widely and watched television documentaries about it because it has remained with me. Of course, there was family involvement. My Uncle Ken enlisted for World War I when he was 16. He fought in France when he was 17, 18 and 19, and he was wounded there. That was the calibre of Australian men of that era. They were big, raw-boned and uneducated, you might say, but they would take on anything. They did it for us, and we should never forget that. About a month ago, I was privileged to visit Bomana War Cemetery, just outside Port Moresby, where I located the grave of my cousin, Ernie, who died on the north coast of

New Guinea on 5 June 1945 after the Kokoda campaign. I had always wanted to do that, and I am very happy to have achieved it.

I am concerned about Australia's future and the attitude of our young people. I think that we have developed a very soft underbelly in this country. You no longer find many of the raw-boned, tough young blokes who would take on the world. They were around from 1941 to 1945, for the 1914-18 war, for the Korean War and so on. You do not find many of those people around any more. Although there are exceptions, the majority of the young people today ...

Mrs Padgham-Purich: You find them out bush.

Mr SETTER: You do find them out bush but, for the majority in this country, there has been a complete attitudinal change. Instead of wanting to do something for their country by defending it, they want their country to do something for them. That is a great shame. The ethic of standing up for your mates and your country, defending your principles and your pride at all costs, is fast disappearing if not lost. Instead, people dob in their mates and climb over them to gain some personal advantage. That is very sad.

Our defence forces have been in decline for the last 10 or 12 years or more. Kangaroo '95 and previous Kangaroo exercises were held here but, as members would appreciate if they read the little that appears in the media about them, those exercises are designed only to address minor incursions by a small force landing on our coast. The reality is that, if somebody wanted to attack Australia, they would not come only in their 20s or 30s, but in their tens, if not hundreds, of thousands. With our total defence forces numbering around 25 000 or 30 000, we would not stand a chance. In my opinion, what has happened in this country is an absolute disgrace. Although I do not have the actual figure, we had hundreds of thousands of men and women under arms and fielded 8 or 9 divisions in World War II. I am always reminded of the Boy Scouts motto, `Be prepared'. I think that this country would do well to remember it and live by it.

It takes a long time to train an army, particularly given today's sophisticated weapons. No longer can you grab a person off the street, put them in uniform, give them a .303 and tell them to go off and fight a war. That is what happened in World War II. Our people have to be well trained and capable of using highly sophisticated weapons. We are losing that expertise. Unless we redress that problem, we will pay a heavy price one day. We have always thought that, because Australia is an isolated island in theSouth Pacific, we are not very vulnerable. World War II should have taught us a lesson but, sadly, it did not. Given today's sophisticated transport equipment, weapons, missiles etc, we are as vulnerable as the rest of the world.

As history tells us, and the Chief Minister may have mentioned earlier, countless wars have occurred following the war to end all wars, which was generations ago. There is the Korean War, the Vietnam war and the Malayan Peninsula conflict. We hear now of war in Bosnia, Africa and so on. It is never ending. Mark my words, it will happen to us one of these days as the world grows smaller. Unless we ensure that we stay prepared and do not forget, I predict that we will pay a very high price. I commend the Chief Minister for his motion.

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Mr BAILEY (Wanguri): Mr Speaker, today is a very important day in the history of Australia and of the world. It has been 50 years since the cessation of hostilities in the Pacific. From listening to reports of events that have been taking place around Australia today and over the last few months, I believe we are all overawed by the events of 50 years ago. Recently, we commemorated the 50th anniversary of the Bombing of Darwin. Even today, it has been emphasised that people in Australia did not know a great deal about what actually happened in Darwin. Many Australians did not know that Darwin was bombed repeatedly. Unfortunately, truth is one of the first casualties of war. Information about what is happening ceases to be made available.

The Chief Minister and the Leader of the Opposition spoke about the events of 50 years ago. They spoke about the debt of gratitude that we owe to our parents, our grandparents and many others, throughout Australia and the world, who fought for what they believed was right and would create a better world. They said that those people fought so that Australians could live in a free and democratic country. While people may criticise certain aspects of Australia's political system, we live in a free and democratic society compared with many other places in the world. During World War II, 40 000 Australians gave up their lives so that we can enjoy the benefits 50 years later. I am sure that today many people around Australia will heap praise on the work of those very brave Australian, American, British and other Allied soldiers, nurses and civilians, as people have been doing throughout this year and will continue to do in the future.

A couple of weeks ago, I attended a ceremony at the Darwin Entertainment Centre to open a display of photographs from East Timor that formed part of the AustraliaRemembers celebrations. Listening to a soldier and to East Timorese who were there at the time, 2 aspects in particular haunt me. We lost 40 000 Australians in all theatres of war during World War II. My estimate of Australia's population at the time is around 6 million or 8 million, but other members may have a more accurate figure. Thus, we lost 40 000 from the several millions of our population. For those who lost people to whom they were close, the sacrifice of losing a husband, father or brother was huge. Nevertheless, we should take into account that, while we lost 40 000 from several millions, East Timor lost 40 000 from a population of barely half a million. They lost 40 000 in a war that was not even theirs, whilst helping Australian troops when the Japanese invaded East Timor. As the Leader of the Opposition said, it was a reasonable possibility that the Japanese would not have invaded East Timor if the Allies had not breached its neutrality in the first place.

Mrs Padgham-Purich: That is being wise after the event.

Mr BAILEY: I have no criticism necessarily of that event, but I think we should reflect on it. What I did find horrific in what we were told at that opening ceremony was that, when efforts were made to research what had occurred in East Timor, the East Timorese were not even counted among the war dead because they were not Allies. When we went into East Timor, we believed that we were doing the right thing in defending Australia from the approaching Japanese. I have no criticism of that decision taken by the government of the day even though, in hindsight, it may be argued that it was unnecessary and created many problems. What I do criticise is that East Timor lost to the Japanese almost 10% of its population, perhaps the largest percentage of any population in South-East Asia that was devastated by the Japanese. It is estimated that between 40 000 and 60 000 East Timorese

died at the hands of the Japanese. Many Australians who were there said that they would return to help East Timor one day. While around Australia today there are many ceremonies to thank Australians for their sacrifices for a free and democratic society, East Timor, a small country which lost as many people as did Australia, still does not enjoy the freedom and democracy that we enjoy.

On this day, as many people have said, we must remember what happened 50 years ago and the reasons why Australia went to war. As the Leader of the Opposition said, we must remember those who gave their lives to defend the values that we hold dear, pass on our respect and thanks for what the people of that generation

did, and attempt to ensure that the events of 50 years ago never recur. We must ensure that governments and military commanders do not allow the circumstances that led to World Wars I and II to develop again. However, when we look around, we see events in the Balkans and elsewhere. I believe that we should have learnedfrom our mistakes. Following World War II, procedures were supposed to have been put in place to ensure that never again would there be wars like those of 50 years ago. Nevertheless, they continue.

Members who watched Four Corners last night would have seen the program on the Kokoda Trail. Some of the most heroic acts carried out by Australians during World War II took place in Papua New Guinea along the Kokoda Trail. In very small numbers, Australians there stopped the advancing Japanese to the point where their so-called retreat was actually a victory for the Australians. What happened? That information was not made known to the Australian public at the time. The bureaucrats, generals and others criticised the Australians on the ground. For their own political and miliary ends, they censored the truth about what was occurring.

I have to say that nothing has changed. I refer again to our nearest neighbour, East Timor. For almost 20 years, it has been controlled by Indonesia. Indonesia will celebrate 50 years of independence in 2 days time. It is interesting to note that, on the one hand, Indonesia grew out of an independence movement that wanted to throw off the shackles of colonialism while, on the other hand, it has maintained colonial rule over our nearest neighbour for nearly 20 years. All federal and most state governments stand condemned by both sides of politics for their attitude towards what has occurred in East Timor. We have allowed that to take place for the same reason that the Germans and the Japanese were allowed to get away with their militaristic intentions initially - people did not stand up and say that what they were doing was wrong.

On this 50th anniversary of the end of the war in the Pacific, and the need to celebrate our free and democratic society, shouldn't we at least spend a little time and a little compassion on the people of East Timor? They sacrificed far more for Australia in some ways than even Australia did for Australia. They moved from Portuguese colonialism to Indonesian colonialism. I know that even you, Mr Speaker, have a vested interest in the issue of East Timor. In speeches in this Assembly, you have spoken about the way in which Indonesia went in there 20 years ago to stop the bloodshed. Even if one accepts all of the pro-Indonesian line or your beliefs as to why they went in there, Mr Speaker, why is it that 20 years later the Indonesians still will not allow the East Timorese to decide whether or not they want Indonesia to be their colonial master? The Indonesians have spent probably more per head of population in East Timor than in any other area of Indonesia. They have done a great deal of work on the

schools, roads and other infrastructure. Even on a most beneficial assessment of what they have done, we have to question whether it is time that the East Timorese were asked whether they want this form of colonialism, no matter how benevolent it is. If they do want it, that is fine but allow them to say that.

Australians gave up their lives 50 years ago, but the East Timorese continue to give up their lives. We had a debate in this House nearly 4 years ago, following the Dili massacre. Many members on both sides condemned the actions in Santa Cruz cemetery on that day in November 1991. That was not an isolated incident, but was one of many incidents over many years. It is my belief that the Northern Territory's good relationship with Indonesia should be used to encourage Indonesia to find a lasting and peaceful resolution to the conflict in East Timor. What better day to join together and call on Indonesia to act than on the 50th anniversary of the end of the war in the Pacific.

I do not want to criticise the previous actions of the Indonesians, whether that be the politicians or the military. The only way that there will ever be a resolution to the problem in East Timor is if all sides - that is, the Indonesians and the Timorese - sit down together to come up with a peaceful, lasting solution in the same way as we saw De Klerk and Mandela do in South Africa. You can be enemies for many years but work together once you decide that you want to find a peaceful solution. The very way in which Australia and Japan work together now shows that former enemies can work together for the common good. It is fascinating to note that, after 50 years, the Japanese are still finding it very difficult to apologise for what they did in World War II. In 20 years time, perhaps we will have to apologise to the East Timorese for what we have allowed to happen to them.

I would like to touch on one of the most horrific things that happened in World War II, and it took place towards the end of the war. I refer to the dropping of atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. We heard the member for Palmerston's outrageous comments after he visited Hiroshima a year or 2 ago to commemorate the bombing of Hiroshima. He said he believed that it was a good thing that had occurred then.

Mrs Padgham-Purich: It stopped the war, didn't it?

Mr Coulter: There were some benefits.

Mr BAILEY: I have no doubt that it stopped the war. Many historians have said that there were other options available. I am not ...

Mr Coulter: In the bright light of hindsight.

Mr BAILEY: Some of that is in hindsight and ...

Mr Coulter: All of that is in hindsight.

Mr BAILEY: ... a considerable amount is from comments by people in positions of power and knowledge at the time who deliberately made the decisions. Others voiced their concern at the time and expressed other opinions.

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I will not enter that debate because my time is short, but I am sure that, in hindsight, even the lunatics on the other side who believe that dropping the bomb was a great thing would condemn totally the buildup of nuclear weapons that has occurred since. I would hope that they would agree at least on the need for the world to reduce its stockpile of nuclear weapons. The member for Palmerston has been to Hiroshima and has seen the damage that occurred. Lofty Plane, the president of the RSL in Darwin, said that what he saw on that day was atrocious, and that was only a small bomb compared to what is available currently.

Throughout Australia and around the world at present, we are condemning the nuclear tests that the French propose to undertake at Mururoa.

Mr Coulter: You would have to agree that the second half of the century has been considerably more peaceful than the first half.

Mr BAILEY: I do not know. If we look at the Balkans, countries in Africa and many other places, I suspect that the incidence of war has not changed a great deal.

Mr Coulter: I suspect that you do not know what you are talking about. Have a look at the picture on the back of the paper you were given today.

Mr BAILEY: We have a situation in which the French want to continue nuclear testing. One has to ask why, in this day and age, any country would want to continue to develop weapons of mass destruction. I have a request with the Chief Minister at present to allow me to join politicians who intend travelling to Tahiti to pass on the concerns of the people of the Northern Territory and elsewhere in Australia about the French returning to conduct tests at Mururoa. I hope that, if I am able to travel there to present a petition from the people of the Northern Territory, all members of the Assembly will join me in signing the petition to condemn universally testing by the French in the region at such an inappropriate time - 50 years after the end of hostilities in the Pacific.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH (Nelson): Mr Speaker, I rise to support the Chief

Minister's motion and to pay my respects to the defence personnel who fought in World War II for my country. We cannot consider World War II in isolation when referring to the bravery and heroism of Australian soldiers - and, when I say `soldiers', I include airmen and sailors. We must consider also the bravery and heroism shown in World War I and even in the Boer War, and we cannot ignore what Australian personnel did in Korea and Vietnam. That is not at issue in all the wars in which Australians have fought, whether on behalf of Australia, the British Commonwealth or our allies. I think every member would concede that the Australian soldier has always been somebody that we could look up to, whether they fought and won a particular battle or fought and died. In either case, they are people of whom we should be very proud. Australian defence personnel have outstanding abilities, especially when they are working or fighting as a group. They appear to have initiative that the defence forces of other countries do not have. They have a bravery that the forces of many other countries do not have. They have the discipline that makes them a defence force to be reckoned with by any other country.

I have been racking my brain, but I do not recall where I was when it was announced that the war in the Pacific was over. I recall my mother being very glad and, like others in

Perth at the time, she took me to public gatherings at the time. All of the public gatherings were noted for one feature - they generated a great deal of public bonhomie. You joined in dancing with people in the streets. This went on for some time and, although people did not know each other, they were happy to be together. It was like having all one's Christmases rolled into one. There was goodwill everywhere. People's toes might have been trodden on, but nobody was nasty. Everybody smiled and was happy.

Among my recollections from World War II is my mother sending food parcels to cousins in England. Whilst food, clothing and petrol were rationed in Australia, people in England had it much harder. I remember helping her pack these food parcels with items containing concentrated protein, including tinned meat. I can never understand why they liked camp pie. I do not mind camp pie, but our cousins loved the tins that my mother sent to them. She also sent eggs because they were very difficult to obtain in London. The eggs had to be 100% clean. They were packed in clarified lard or dripping, which was a little tricky. Sometimes they arrived in good condition, but sometimes they exploded on the way. Dried fruit and sweets were also eagerly looked forward to. Sweets were difficult to obtain in Australia, but my mother used to try to send some sugar. The parcels were packed in cardboard boxes which were wrapped in calico that was then sewn. The address was written on the calico and the stamps affixed. When they reached her

cousin in England, the stitching was carefully undone. The thread was saved and the calico was saved and washed. Everything was reused.

There were coupons for clothing, butter, sugar, tea and petrol. My mother did not have a car and therefore petrol coupons were of no relevance to her. A certain number of coupons were available for each adult or child. I did not drink tea at the time and my mother would swap my tea coupons for sugar or butter coupons. With the extra sugar coupons, she would make cakes and biscuits to swap with friends for other things. You did not have enough coupons to buy all the clothing you wanted. Even if you had enough coupons, the shops were not stocked with fancy clothes. It was not a time for extravagances, frills or fripperies. You mended your clothes. Dressmakers who could convert older clothes into the new fashions sprang up everywhere. Parents' clothes were cut down for the children. School uniforms were hard to come by because you had to have coupons for them. Sugar could be obtained only with coupons, and sweets were very scarce in the big stores. My mother had a sweet tooth. I remember queuing up with her at Foy and Gibson's when particular sweets arrived. On that day, you would have to queue to obtain a small bag of them. Although you paid for them, each person was allowed only one small bag.

Uniformed defence personnel were everywhere. We saw them in the streets, the suburbs and everywhere else. We saw some women in uniform, but mostly they were men. Although I was not an adult, I learned to respect those people. I did that because my mother and other adults told us that they were fighting for our country and were prepared to die for it. Therefore, they had to be respected.

Whilst we lived in the city in World War II, my mother had come from the country and had friends in the country where people are more conservative. Many people who lived on the land could not be called up because they were in a necessary industry and had to continue farming to produce food. If it was thought that a young man of eligible age had not joined up, although this did not happen as frequently as in World War I, my mother told me they would

be sent a white feather anonymously in the mail. In other words, somebody thought that they should have joined up. They might have had a minor sickness or some physical deformity that was not apparent, and that may have been the reason why they were not called up but, of course, that could not be publicised. These young men were castigated a great deal, especially by the mothers of sons who were called up. That is understandable, human nature being what it is.

In those days, mothers and wives wore badges of honour if their sons or husbands went away to war. There was a little star on this badge for each son who went

away to war. I recall seeing in the street one day a lady who had 7 stars on her badge. I thought that that was pretty good for one family, but it would have been very sad if they had died. If the sons or husbands died, the nearest female relative - the mother or the wife - was given another badge. From memory, the badge issued when they went away to war was worn on the left side and, if they died, that badge was worn on the right side.

In those days in Perth, probably as in other cities, there were many displaced persons who were evacuees from Europe. When my mother went into town, she always took me past a lovely little shop that displayed pretty little treasures and beautiful pieces of jewellery. She told me that the refugees had smuggled them out of Europe. Often they had to leave these countries in great haste and leave all their large possessions behind, but they brought all these little treasures and jewellery. When they came to Perth, they sold them to obtain money to live. I had not seen anything as pretty or as beautiful as these pieces of lace, brooches, rings and fans. It was only a little shop, but I still remember where it was in Perth. It was an education to me to see that people could have these beautiful things because I had never had the experience of seeing so many beautiful things.

The church services in World War II were oriented always to the sacrifices of war, to the brave men and women who were prepared to give their lives for the ideals that they believed in and to fight for our country. When people spoke in the streets or in shops, if there was a little inconvenience, everybody would remind each other in colloquial banter that there was a war on and therefore they simply put up with the inconvenience.

There was petrol rationing. As I said, it did not affect my mother and me because she did not have a car, but petrol rationing did inhibit people quite a bit. Because of the distances that people in the country, especially farmers, had to travel, they received a bigger allowance than people in the city. To counteract rationing, charcoal burners were invented. You saw them on many vehicles, both cars and trucks, especially in the country. Many farmers had sidelines in making charcoal, particularly to burn in the gas producers on cars. Thus, gas took the place of petrol so that people could travel further.

In the suburbs of Perth, and probably in other cities also, very few street lights were lit. You always pulled the curtains at night so that the lights did not shine outside. Goodwill was more evident in public places. It was not that everybody was happy, but goodwill was around. Street lights were dimmed or were not lit. The top half of all car lights was covered and the bottom half shaded over. Although cars did not travel as fast then, that made their lights difficult to see. My mother told me that white lines were drawn around the bottoms of cars, but I do not know the reason for that. Perhaps it was so that the cars could be seen by other drivers.

I believe that that spirit, which was alive in World War II, is still alive today. It is a pity more members of the public could not be made aware of it. It is probably an unfortunate thing to have to say, but we need another war to make those type of people realise that Australia still has brave people who will fight to keep our country the way we like it now. It does not make me sad, but it makes me very angry when I hear about protesting against Kangaroo '95. We do not need people like them. I have never come across them face to face, but I believe that it is the duty of any true Australian who comes across people like that to tell them, by word or action, what they feel. Whilst the Kangaroo '95 exercise might seem to many people to be a waste of money, with soldiers playing at war in the bush, we must have these exercises. We would like to think that we will stay at peace with all our neighbours. It is an old cliche, but it is still very relevant to say that the price of peace is eternal vigilance. Those who are thinking continually about the defence of Australia are the true, brave Australians. It is a pity that those who are demonstrating or making themselves objectionable to the Kangaroo '95 forces cannot be made aware of this.

My father was not in the defence forces. He was a farmer. However, my grandfather was in the Victorian navy and my 2 uncles were gassed in World War I in France. I am sorry that I did not know any of them, particularly my 2 uncles. They were prepared to go away to fight in the trenches because that was what men did in those days - they fought for their country. They joined up without much regard for their own safety. Fighting for their country meant fighting for their families and the farms they had left behind. The other side of that was that their mothers, sisters and all of the other relatives that they had left behind were very responsive to the needs of the soldiers who went overseas.

I have the highest regard for the members of the defence forces. It is a pity that all Australians cannot have the same regard for them. Perhaps some individuals do not live up to the ideals, but they are only ordinary people and some of us in the community do not live up to the high ideals that we should live up to. Nevertheless, I believe that this commemoration of 50 years after the end of World War II is a very significant occasion. I hope there are no more wars in my lifetime, nor in the lifetime of many of my descendants. I hope also that all Australians will remember the bravery of those people who have been prepared to die for their country in previous years.

Mrs BRAHAM (Braitling): Mr Speaker, it is my pleasure to speak to this motion today. It was interesting to listen to the other speakers. Obviously, many of us draw on our personal experiences. I do so too, by paying tribute to my father who fought in New Guinea and my uncle who was a POW in Changi. I vaguely remember my

father leaving his young wife with 3 very young children, of whom I was the youngest, and I remember the heartache it caused us. My mother moved in with my grandparents for the remainder of the war years because she felt she was unable to cope with 3 very young children on her own. I was lucky in the fact that my father returned home.

Many of my memories of the war are happy ones because he brought us the stories of comradeship and mateship that bind Australians in time of war. My uncle was not so lucky. He was forced to work on the Burma line. He was in Changi at the same time as Sir Weary Dunlop and suffered for the rest of his life from injuries that occurred during that period. He returned home a living skeleton basically. I am only sorry that, over the years, I did not take the time to sit down and talk to him about some of his memories. All that history

has gone now. He kept in touch with many of his POW mates for the rest of his life. A network developed and, as each member passed on, there was always someone at the funeral who would remember those terrible experiences. I pay that tribute to my father and uncle who have both long since passed on.

The effect the war had on families cannot be overestimated. I lived in a southern state, and we experienced much of what other members have mentioned today. An interesting aspect of the war was that it marked a turning point in the role that women played in our society. Never before in history had women joined the work force as they did during the war years. It was never anticipated that they would work in some of the jobs that they undertook. It changed women's perception of their abilities and skills. So many of the women who were presented with certificates today played a role that had never been asked of women before in history. Their strength, adaptability, flexibility and contribution to the war at home and abroad must continue to be recognised. That turning point, when society recognised the contribution that women could make to the work force, has affected the role of women since then. There is much to admire about the contribution of those women to the war effort.

Even though there is considerable emphasis today on Darwin, we should not underestimate the importance of Alice Springs as a strategic link in the war effort. Alice Springs was a vital link and became a huge army railhead. Over the last month, the Back to the Track celebrations came to Alice Springs at a time when we were opening the Pioneer Hall of Fame. Recognition has been given to what was a major engineering feat. Consider the effort that went into moving vast supplies over an unmade road for so many years. That feat has been unheralded until now. The Back to the Track celebrations recognised the efforts of the Darwin Overland Maintenance Force, as it was known. There are many myths attached to the track.

There is the myth that the Americans built the north-south road. That is not so. It was sealed by the Allied Works Council. Resident D.D. Smith of Alice Springs was instrumental in upgrading that road.

The Back to the Track celebrations brought back memories for veterans, who made the trip, and many locals. I am pleased that we have been able to recognise their contribution in moving supplies to Darwin over many years. An estimated 195 000 troops passed through Alice Springs in those years. That is a huge number when you consider that, at the time, Alice Springs had a population of approximately 900 people. There is little evidence in Alice Springs today of that huge army presence. Not a great deal remains. Originally, the camp was sited in the area that is fittingly known as Anzac Oval today. The population of the town was swelled by the men. At its peak, the DOMF was staffed by 8000 troops and 3000 trucks. It moved many tons of supplies by road from 1940 to 1944.

Alice Springs has always been strategically important to Australia. The air force recognised its strategic location and developed an airfield at a site, 7 miles south of town, called the 7-Mile drome. It was constructed in 1940 as an alternative to the town airfield that was used by pioneers such as Eddie Connellan. The present Alice Springs Airport is on the site of the 7-Mile drome. Alice Springs still has not lost its strategic importance, which is recognised by the continuing involvement of the allied forces in the town.

There are 3 units in the town. The RAAF No 1 Radar Surveillance Unit is located near Alice Springs at Jindalee. It is known as the Jindalee Operational Radar Network. The unit

was formed in 1992, under the control of RAAF Air Commander, to act as a test bed for development of the Jindalee over-the-horizon radar and as an operational radar site as required. The RAAF has had an association with Alice Springs since World War II, and the development of Jindalee maintains that association.

United States Air Force Detachment 421 also has had a long association with Alice Springs. As long ago as 1955, negotiations with the Australian government and US Air Force Team 421 established a seismic monitoring station in Alice Springs. Because the mission of team 421 was classified, numerous speculations and rumours relating to the purpose of this station began to appear in newspapers. One story speculated that the station was for rocket testing and tracking. Team 421 was officially renamed United States Air Force Detachment 421 in 1960. In 1979, as a result of an agreement between the USAF and the Australian Department of Science, the station was converted to a joint operation. With this agreement, the role of detachment 421, now known also as the Joint Geological and Geophysical

Research Station, an integral part of the United States atomic energy detection system, was unclassified. Its role is now to record natural and man-made seismic disturbances in the earth in order to monitor nuclear test ban treaties.

The third detachment in the town is the Joint Defence Base Research Facility at Pine Gap. For a number of years, it has been monitoring space movements for the United States and the Australian governments. These 3 units or detachments have been in Alice Springs for a long time and have been accepted as part of the community. I imagine that we are talking about a population of over 1000 people and their families. They make a major contribution to the town. Recently, a ceremony granted them freedom of entry to the city. In that way, the Alice Springs Town Council confirmed their welcome in our town, saying that the people of Alice Springs are glad to have them and asking them to continue to participate in the way that they have.

Today's anniversary means many things to many people and brings back different memories. This year marks the Australia Remembers celebration. We should give our children the message that it is not so much that Australia remembers as that Australia will not forget. We should never allow to be forgotten what happened in the past that affected our nation so greatly. It is important not to dwell on the past, but we must never forget what happened. We must ensure that the memories remain.

We have a wonderful lifestyle and a great country. Our children enjoy a freedom that many children in other countries do not enjoy. We need to protect that fiercely, be very proud of what we have and be very proud to be called Australians. Someone asked me the other day where I came from. I am a fourth generation Australian of very mixed origins, and I am very proud of that. That is the message that we should pass on to our children: be proud to be Australian, be proud of what your forefathers did and be proud of what happened many years ago. We should remember, but let us ensure that our children do not forget.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Speaker, it is with deep reverence and great joy, in participating in an occasion like this, that I rise to speak to this motion. I could say a great many things about the VP Day celebrations. A number of other speakers have indicated how consciousness of the war in the Pacific, and the proximity to and reality of conflict in Australia, were impressed on them. As somebody who was born shortly after VP Day in 1945, 50 years

ago today, I hope to contribute to this debate by referring to some of those feelings. They stretch back over my lifetime and they come as recently as today.

All members will be gathering later today for the service at the Cenotaph. Most of us went to East Point today to see the gathering of World War II veterans, not only those who served overseas and in a military capacity on Australian soil, but also the civilians who played their part, men and women. Deservedly, the women have been given greater prominence in these celebrations. In the past, there was criticism, with some justification, that their contribution had not been appropriately recognised. Today was an important part of those celebrations, and I will return to that.

My personal feelings and views are shared by other members of this Assembly. We owe a great debt to our mothers, fathers, uncles, aunts and others who contributed mightily in Australia's darkest hours to provide a world for us that is a richer and happier place. I have to say that one element of my reaction to it has been the ironic feeling that, in one sense, it was a privilege to have been able to contribute so mightily. There was certainly fear, death, suffering and long, hard hours of sheer hard work but, at times, I almost envy the mighty contribution that that generation was able to make.

Anybody who watched last night's Four Corners program on the Kokoda campaign, and anybody who has studied some of the history of the Kokoda campaign, cannot be anything other than overwhelmed by both the personal sacrifice and the laconic good humour of the participants. To hear those great names of Australian units coming across, as they do every Anzac Day and as they did on that program - the 2nd/14th, the 2nd/27th, the chocolate soldiers of the 39th battalion and so on - gives me a strong feeling of being Australian, and a strong desire to stand up and place on the record of this Assembly my gratitude to them. I used the word `laconic'. They were men of few words. Laconia was Spartic. That is the derivation of the word `laconic'. They were men of few words. They were good-humoured also. I did not note names, but one man was talking about the grim personal struggles and hand-to-hand combat on the Kokoda Trail, and the next minute he was obviously overwhelmed by emotion. Unfortunately, as the member for Braitling was saying, often we did not take the chance to listen to those people and hear some of those accounts. There were 2 sides to that of course.

Coming closer to home, I want to pay particular tribute to some of the air force personnel and squadrons who fought here. I had the privilege to contribute to the stained glass window that was opened recently at the RAAF chapel. I would like to pass on my appreciation to Rev Noel Williams for organising that memento. I commend it to members who have not had the opportunity to see it as yet. The chapel at the RAAF base in Darwin is now graced by a splendid stained glass window.

Apart from my appreciation in that regard, there was a personal element to that. I think particularly of the contribution of my father's cousin and his brother in the

RAAF. Tom Smith and my late uncle, Ross Bell, joined the RAAF at the beginning of the hostilities in Europe. The RAAF was highly selective, and it was the best and the fittest of our young men who went off to the Empire Air Training Program in Canberra. I think of my grandmother and her sister, whom I did not know, sending off 2 fine sons. Tommy Smith was an only child. They both survived the horrors of conflict on the other side of the world. Tommy flew Spitfires in the Battle of Britain in 1941 and returned to Australia. My Uncle Ross was based in Gibraltar and

flew in a Hudson bomber squadron. He returned to Australia and flew in Catalinas. Tommy returned with 452 Squadron and was killed in a tragic accident on the Strauss airstrip here.

Some members may be aware that only 50% of the fatal air force casualties were killed in conflict. The other 50% were in flights otherwise. There is quite a story behind this. Tommy Smith was flying as an observer in a Wirraway after one of the leading aircraftsmen mechanics had been lost in the scrub. Apparently, the Wirraway was investigating something when it hit the deck and both pilot and observer were killed. The mechanic was found a day later safe and sound. One of the very moving experiences of my life was to take my Uncle Ross, on his first trip here only a year or 2 before he died, to the Adelaide River War Cemetery where Tommy Smith is buried. I am sure that he would have appreciated, and his family will continue to appreciate, that the contribution which both Ross and his cousin made is still remembered. It has a tangible symbol in the stained glass window at the RAAF base. That was a wonderful day. Local Territorians, great Australians, Wilf Arthur and Sam Calder, were both present at that service. Neither of those men need my accolades in this context because their deeds are well known and well recorded. I pay tribute to them today.

I pay tribute also to the Australia Remembers Committee, both nationally and locally. The Minister for Veterans Affairs, Hon Con Sciacca, has done a wonderful job, as has the local committee, headed by Bob Alford with Robyn Smith as executive officer. In passing, I mention that Bob Alford has told me that the wreck of the Wirraway I was talking about is still in the scrub. I hope to have a chance to visit that site when I have a spare weekend. I place on record my appreciation of those people's efforts in bringing to fruition such an important Australian celebration. I have been involved with the Australia Remembers Committee in Alice Springs, although I am afraid I have been something of an absentee chairman. I pass on my appreciation to the Alice Springs sub-branch of the RSL for hosting those meetings and for its obvious contribution to the year's celebrations. I will not mention all those involved, but I very much appreciate the contributions of the manager, John Newland, Peter Davis, and all those who have

served on that committee. I regret that I cannot be in Alice Springs for today's ceremony.

I mentioned the Adopt a Vet program in debate in this Assembly in the last sittings. Alex Tyndall is an Alice Springs resident who has been working at Braitling Primary School and perhaps elsewhere. That is a Territory initiative of which we should be proud, because we have done well in that regard.

Returning to today's celebrations, I was particularly heartened to see 2 constituents from Imanpa, Mick Mutata and Tjuki Pumpjack, whom I had not expected to see there today. Members may see on the news that I was dragooned as interpreter by the Channel 8 news team. I have recorded the stories of a number of the men who worked in those employment contracts. Their hair-raising tales of dodging bombs in Katherine in 1943 are an untold part of the story. They did menial jobs around the towns, an experience that changed Aboriginal life around the bush dramatically. I will not dilate on that theme. Mick Mutata tells quite a story about dodging the bombs and picking up from Mataranka a white baby whose parents had been killed and taking it to the mission to be looked after. It was appropriate that their contribution be recognised in that way. At the time, I mentioned my appreciation to the member for the Northern Territory, Hon Warren Snowdon, who presented those certificates. I would like to pass on my appreciation to him for the organisation, and also to the Chief

Minister for the bipartisan spirit in which that was done. I am sure it was appreciated both by the locals and those who travelled from afar.

I had the opportunity to fall into conversation with Mr Albert Symons who was on his first visit. He and his wife are from Tweed Heads in New South Wales. They celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary recently. That dates events pretty well. Mr Symons served on searchlights with the 70th Ack-Ack Squadron. Ours is a relatively small country, and one picks up from one's circle of friends a number of associations. As the father of one of my wife's closest friends worked on the anti-aircraft batteries in Darwin during the war, it was interesting to speak to Mr Symonds.

I could say much more about the 50th anniversary of victory in the Pacific. It affords us an opportunity to reflect on a part of our heritage that has played a dominant role in shaping this nation and its people. As with any great event, our particular appreciation of it changes with time and experience. I hope that, by my comments today, I have demonstrated why that is so. I believe that, on the 50th anniversary of victory in the Pacific, we must say to each other and collectively, `lest we forget'.

Mr STIRLING (Nhulunbuy): Mr Speaker, it is difficult for any individual to appreciate the enormity of the individual sacrifices made by many people among the Allied nations throughout World War II to protect the sovereignty of this nation and others, and our freedoms. This becomes much more difficult with the passage of time.

I am reminded of a comment the Minister for Veterans Affairs, Hon Con Sciacca, made earlier this year during a visit to Darwin. He said that, in speaking to students in Melbourne and Sydney, he had realised they did not know Darwin had been bombed during World War II, nor how the Australians had fought off the Japanese in New Guinea during those dark days when the enemy was right on our shores. He realised then the scope of the job before him in planning for this year, Australia Remembers, and went to Cabinet and the Prime Minister with a far grander proposed budget than he had envisaged originally. I give him full credit for obtaining the dollars he needed to do the job because it is not easy to obtain money for any project from this Cabinet or this Prime Minister. I believe the Minister for Veterans Affairs made AustraliaRemembers truly a year to remember, and I give him full credit for his energy and enthusiasm in planning the whole year of events.

I want to share with members a very special 2 days when members of 13 Squadron held a reunion in Nhulunbuy last week. 13 Squadron flew Ventura bombers from Gove during 1944-45 on missions through the Dutch East Indies. In conjunction with the Northern Territory Australia Remembers Committee, the local committee had worked on planning the reunion for most of this year. Thus, it was with some relief that, at about lunchtime on Thursday, we saw the chartered CA47 arrive with the 18 veterans, and 10 wives and family members who were looking after them. It was fitting that the chartered plane was the Air North CA47 which looks like a DC3. It ensured that the veterans arrived in much the fashion that they would have 50 years ago.

We put them on a bus and drove into town past the high school. The sight that awaited them there had to be seen to be appreciated. We had arranged with the primary school for a guard of honour. On turning the corner into Chesterfield Circuit, we saw outside the primary

school 600 students, aged from 5 to 12, all with red and black streamers and carrying placards that spelled out: `Welcome back, 13 Squadron'. Many others held placards saying `Welcome Home', and all had red and black streamers. Within 2 or 3 minutes of stopping the bus, the 28 members of the reunion team were lost in a sea of 600 adoring young people who spilled across the road and closed Chesterfield Circuit. It was 40 minutes before we were able to separate the children

and persuade the veterans to resume their seats on the bus.

I thank the principal, Pat Ellis, for that very heartwarming welcome. All the veterans had lumps in their throats and many had tears in their eyes. They could not quite come to grips with why the town, and the children particularly, would give them such a welcome. However, the people of Gove enjoy their unique lifestyle because of the efforts of all those who fought in World War II, particularly the pilots, navigators and gunners who were based at Gove to protect that part of the country. During their 2-day visit, the veterans toured the Nabalco plant and the mine, and visited historic World War II sites. I must thank the students and the little ones from the child-care centre for turning out to welcome the veterans.

The Administrator arrived on the Friday, as did 13 Squadron's present commanding officer, Squadron Leader Jerry Dowling, and his wife, Flight Lieutenant Jenny Dowling. We took the opportunity to perform with the veterans a sod turning ceremony at the Cenotaph, where we plan to build a wall with Australia Remembers funding. We were very pleased to have His Honour the Administrator and one of the 13 Squadron veterans, Tom Dean, perform that function. We then returned to the Arnhem Club. I must pay tribute to the club for putting on a 1940s-style dinner in the open air under a shade cloth that it had set up, complete with Australia Remembers flags and paraphernalia. I pay tribute to the bakery for providing a `Welcome Back' reunion cake for the veterans. The cake was at least 1 m long and perhaps 0.5 m wide, displaying 13 candles. Of course, there was plenty of 1940s music to dance to.

Mixing with the 28 members of the reunion team over those 2 days, many stories came to the fore. One of the pilots was named Farmer Farris, and it was not long before the origins of his nickname came to the fore. It was put to me that many bomber pilots were, in fact, frustrated fighter pilots. To get the plane off the strip, it was a favourite trick of fighter pilots during the war to collapse the undercarriage atthe very second that the wheels parted contact with the ground. That is one thing in a zippy, fast light fighter, but it is another thing altogether in a big, heavy Ventura bomber. Such was Mr Farris's aim that he wound the Ventura up at one end of the strip, gave it everything it had, the wheels left the tarmac and he collapsed the undercarriage but, alas, the Ventura was not quite ready to take to the air and collapsed back on to the runway with no undercarriage to support it. It drove 2 long furrows all the way down the strip. Henceforth, he was known as Farmer Farris for ploughing the strip. I note that, on that particular occasion, neither the commanding officer's nor the maintenance engineering officer's comments were recorded in the log book.

Many such stories came to light. I met a man named Ted Halloran who had shared a tent with former Prime Minister, Gough Whitlam. He told me that, whilst politically they were quite different, they had felt that they had enough in common

to share a tent which they did for a couple of years in Cooktown and Gove. At 78 years of age, Ted is another fascinating gentleman. He continues to work 5 days a week as a senior partner in a law firm in Sydney. That generation did it tough, and they are still doing it all these years later.

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Another story relates to when they were based in Cooktown and were headed for Labuan. A fairly new jeep had arrived at Cooktown, and they took a fancy to it. It was dismantled and surreptitiously shipped off to Labuan. Of course, it was missed in Cooktown and the flight lieutenant who was responsible for the jeep was fined 600 in instalments in order to replace it. In Labuan, the maintenance men turned up a jeep with foreign serial numbers. They tracked it back, realised that it belonged in Cooktown, and subsequently let them know that the jeep was still in air force hands, albeit in the wrong location. The flight lieutenant was refunded the instalments that he had been required to pay. Another story was that, on the first leg of their flight north, they flew in low formation over Parliament House, Canberra, and managed to break most of the windows.

They were known as the Red Devils, and that was their squadron logo. One of Nhulunbuy's part-time artists, a man called Mr Gil Avila, prepared a welcome sign for the veterans' dinner. It was a huge placard in which he incorporated a Ventura of his own design with its wings folded forward clasping a Trident. It was very much in the tradition of the Red Devils, and the veterans took quite a fancy to it. I would not be surprised if it has been adopted as their new logo.

I pay tribute to the committee members who have put so much time and effort into organising the year in Nhulunbuy, particularly this reunion which was the major function. Unfortunately, on the night of the dinner, Major Eastgate from Norforce was exercising with Kangaroo '95 and could not attend. Di Stirling and Ronlea Koemets put an enormous amount of organisation into fundraising to ensure that everything worked. Bill Scott, the president of the RSL, was most generous in assisting us to host the veterans throughout the 2 days.

Peter Callaghan is a member of the committee and a local historian whom we are very fortunate to have around. He takes a great interest in military folklore in particular. He organised funding, through the Australia Remembers Committee, to make signage for historic World War II sites throughout the area, including the radar station at Yirrkala. He has published a number of works on military activity in north-east Arnhem Land. He was in his element, having 18 veterans from 13 Squadron who had spent time in that area. He was able to sit down with most of them, obtain stories from them and, most importantly, obtain their addresses and contact numbers to follow up various matters. I thank the other committee member, Ian McKay, who is a current member of 13 Squadron, albeit living and

working at Gove. My thanks go also to the Naval Reserve cadets who assisted us on the night of the dinner and the business houses of Gove which were very generous with donations to help us look after the veterans for those 2 days.

Above all, I thank the veterans themselves, all of whom are aged in their 70s, for making the long journey to join the reunion in Darwin, and then making what at their age is a fairly arduous trip in the CA47 to Gove for those 2 days. As I said, they were overwhelmed. They could not believe what we had done for them, but we felt very privileged. Their return gave us, this generation, the opportunity to thank them in person. The honour was all ours. I know that
13 Squadron was only a tiny part of that overall effort, and I have talked about how difficult it is for any one individual to appreciate the enormous effort of all the Allied nations. At least, that insight into 13 Squadron and the veterans' lives gave me a closer appreciation of the overall effort.

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The outcome is that a strong link has been forged - probably for the first time because the township of Nhulunbuy did not exist 50 years ago - between Nhulunbuy, particularly the primary school, and 13 Squadron. I understand that a small part of the primary schoolyard will be dedicated to 13 Squadron. All the veterans signed anAustralia Remembers flag which will be presented as a memento of their visit to the primary school at an assembly. I look forward to the current 13 Squadron and Nhulunbuy retaining the link that has been made. On the veterans' departure, the CA47 fired up on the dot of 10 o'clock - air force punctuality as always. The pilot took them out over the mine, climbing quite steeply, and then turned and came down to 100 ft very quickly in a final farewell to the airstrip that they flew out from 50 years ago to the day from the end of the war. It was a magnificent 2 days. I am grateful to all those who contributed, including the people who billeted the veterans but, first and foremost, I thank the veterans themselves very much for returning.

Mr ADAMSON (Casuarina): Mr Speaker, 50 years ago today, in Washington just before 7 pm on 14 August, as it was on that side of the world, US President Harry Truman told reporters: `I have received this afternoon a message from the Japanese government ... I deem this reply a full acceptance of the Potsdam Declaration which specifies the unconditional surrender of Japan'. At 9 o'clock, Australian Eastern Standard Time, on Saturday 15 August, Prime Minister Chifley announced to the nation that Japan had surrendered. The war was over. It was a war that had claimed more than 30 million lives, the Jews and the Russians paying the highest price in terms of numbers killed.

In the 6 years of warfare, Australians fought with bravery and honour, firstly in the European theatre and then closer to home when war came to the Pacific and

threatened our shores, indeed our very way of life. Australian soldiers, sailors and airmen fought in a manner that was second to none. That is no jingoistic statement; it is an opinion that I firmly hold. The Victoria Cross is the highest honour for valour and bravery that can be awarded to a service man or woman of the Commonwealth. During the course of World War II, it was awarded to Australians on 20 occasions, 10 of which were earned in the Pacific and 10 in Europe. Eleven of those 20 did not live long enough to learn of their awards. They paid for our freedom with their lives.

Only 2 of the VC winners who survived the war are alive today to celebrate 50 years of peace. Sir Roden Cutler and Edward Kenner may have been honoured for their bravery, but I am sure they would be the first to acknowledge the bravery and heroism of the many thousands of Australians who never received such recognition. In all, nearly 40 000 Australians gave their lives so that we can stand freely in this Chamber today. Over 20 000 Australians were

wounded in action, with a similar number forced to suffer appalling conditions in brutal POW camps at the hands of the Germans and the Japanese.

As we know, war came to these shores and no place suffered more than Darwin. On 19 February 1942, war came to this very site, as we are reminded whenever we walk past the plaque, located outside this Chamber, which remembers Postmaster Hurtle Bald, his family and staff who lost their lives on that day. Today, we have spoken about how little the rest of Australia knew then about the bombing of Darwin. This applies equally today. Only this morning, I was speaking to the Mayor of Bourke, Wal Mitchell. Not long ago, he attended a function at which he was seated next to the plaque in this Parliament House. He told me how, sitting in such peaceful and safe surroundings looking down at the plaque, it had brought home to him the awful devastation of the war, making it seem more real than ever before. Those of us who have not lived through such a conflict can only imagine what it was like to face death, to worry about loved ones and to suffer the loss of loved ones. I thank God that, to this point, this generation has not been forced to face such a threat on that scale and I pray we never do.

It is with great gratitude that I thank the Aboriginal people of Australia who played such an important role in the war. All of us have heard of the contribution of the Tiwi people but, until recently, the contribution of many other Aboriginals went almost unnoticed and certainly without recognition. One who can hold his head high, both for his contribution and as a role model for his fellow men, was Reg Saunders who graduated as Australia's first Aboriginal army officer on 25 November 1944. Reg fought with honour and distinction in both World War II and Korea. I thank Reg and his Aboriginal brothers and sisters for their contribution in

the war.

Recently, Darwin hosted a reunion of women who had contributed greatly to the war effort. Meeting Nancy Wake - that brave Aussie, the White Mouse - was an event that I will remember for the rest of my life. While Nancy's contribution is well documented, that is not the case for the hundreds of thousands of women who staffed factories, hospitals, farms and almost every other profession to keep the war machine ticking over. Those women deserve our heartfelt thanks. So too do the countless and often unrecognised civilians who contributed to the war effort in many ways. A year ago, at the Railway Club in Parap, I attended a ceremony to honour the workers on the NorthAustralian Railway who contributed to the war effort. Finally, nearly 5 decades after the war, their recognition came. In some cases, it has taken nearly 2 generations to recognise these efforts, but recognise them we should.

As we all know, Australia did not fight the war on its own. We readily recognise the contributions of the major Allied forces, from the United States, Great Britain, New Zealand, Canada, Holland and the like, but often the contribution of the smaller countries, particularly in the Pacific, has gone unrecognised. To those nations, we owe a debt of thanks. I think it is fitting that some of those countries were represented at the official peacetime celebrations in Townsville.

Over the last 50 years, there has been debate about whether the dropping of the atomic bomb was needed to end the war. I would like to paint a picture of some of what the Allies faced during what turned out to be the final months of the war. The closer the Allied forces came to Japan, the fiercer became the fighting. Military analysts and historians would note after the war that, as the situation for the Japanese fighting forces became more hopeless, they

relied less on western military tactics and more on their ancient culture. Instead of retreating when hopelessly outnumbered, they would fight literally to the death.

This point is highlighted by 2 major battles. On 19 February 1945, 3 years to the day after the Japanese first bombed Darwin, American marines stormed the beaches of Iwo Jima. The 20 000 Japanese soldiers put up a terrifying fight. When the fighting ended 37 terrible days later, all but 216 of the 20 000 Japanese had fought to the death. The Americans lost 6000 marines, with another 17 000 injured, all this to capture one tiny, albeit strategically-important, island. Worse was to come. The next island was Okinawa where more than 100 000 Japanese soldiers prepared to put up an even fiercer fight. Before the
soldiers landed, the US navy spent a week bombarding the shore with more than 13 000 shells. 154 000 Americans went ashore eventually. This battle lasted more

than 3 months, with the Americans suffering 49 000 deaths or casualties. The Japanese lost a staggering 110 000 men, with little more than 7000 being taken prisoner eventually.

It was in this climate that the US Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Admiral William Leahy, estimated that there would be 35% casualties in the invasion of Japan. Japanese civilians, men, women and children, young and old alike, were all expected to fight to the death because with surrender came dishonour. It was in that climate that President Truman took the decision to use the atomic bomb. I am of a generation that has not been called on to defend this country, and I am grateful for that. I thank those who gave their lives so that generations like mine would not have to fight, and I hope that will always be the case. Nevertheless, we must never take for granted the peace that we enjoy in Australia, nor the price paid by those who have gone before us.

As a member of the Northern Territory's Australia Remembers Committee, I would like to thank everyone in the Northern Territory who has played a part in helping us remember this most important year. Like the member for MacDonnell, I pass on my thanks to Bob Alford and Robyn Smith in particular. In recent years, it has been pleasing to see the increasing number of young people attending remembrance services around the country. The present generation is taking an interest in the past. I believe this generation, my generation, is grateful to those who gave their lives for them. Sadly, war continues around the world, but I hope that never again will any Australian generation be forced to face what ended 50 years ago today. May we never forget those who made this peace possible.

Ms MARTIN (Fannie Bay): Mr Speaker, many members here have just come from a most poignant ceremony at East Point where certificates of appreciation were awarded by the Australia Remembers Committee. Hosting that, I was touched by the way that it was an extremely special moment for each of the 70 men and women who received those certificates. One could have thought of it as simply a nice touch, but it was a very important moment for those men and women. At the end, Centre Stage from Alice Springs sang songs of World War II. That brought tears to the eyes of even hardened souls like Lofty Plane, president of the RSL.

A theme that we have talked about today is that my generation, the baby boomer generation, is beginning to participate in the emotions of what happened 50 years ago. Our generation was very protected from the hard times that our parents and grandparents experienced in the Great Depression and World War II. For us, it was very much a time of

looking forward. Many of us reached a stage in the 1960s and the 1970s when we

rejected war and the whole ethos of war. Alan Seymour's play, One Day in the Year, had a big impact on society in the 1960s. For the first time, a play dared to challenge Anzac Day and all that went with it. It had a very enthusiastic audience, particularly among those in their teens and 20s. In the play, the father was saying that it was his big moment of the year and the son was saying that he did not care about it. All he could see was his father and his father's mates getting drunk. This reflected the gulf between the generation that had been to war and those of us, the baby boomers, who had had no experience of it.

Because of the trauma they had experienced in that war, many never spoke about it to their children. When the fall of Singapore was commemorated 3 years ago, there was a report from Singapore by an ABC correspondent who talked to men who had returned with their wives to Singapore for the ceremony. One man, who had been married for 40 years, cried for the first time over what had happened and talked to his wife about it for the first time after all those years.

We baby boomers were protected from all the emotion involved with the sacrifice that that generation made, basically on our behalf. It is interesting to note how we have softened towards what happened. The Vietnam War was probably the critical time when energies were focused one way or the other. As time passed, we heard people talk of their experiences and historians reveal more of the past, particularly Australia's role in the war in the Pacific. As a result, we are much more focused on remembering and offering our thanks to that generation. For me, the changes came gradually. I was a very strong supporter of the anti-Vietnam War movement and strongly anti-war in general. There were a few key times for me. One was an interview I did a number of years ago with former federal politician, Tom Uren, who talked evocatively about his war experiences, including his 4 years in Changi and working on the Burma railway. His understanding of the whole process and his forgiveness made me rethink my attitude to the past participation in war.

Much more research is available about what happened in Darwin. We have had 3 years to reinvestigate the bombing of Darwin, the war in the Territory, what happened in Papua New Guinea and the tales that emerged about the Kokoda Trail. We have learned how the East Timorese aided Australia and put their lives on the line for us. The relationship between Darwin and Ambon has helped us understand what happened 50 years ago. Like many people at today's ceremony at East Point, I had tears in my eyes. I felt very much that the generation before mine had placed their lives on the line and had worked hard. The women had entered the work force and worked hard in industries that they had never experienced. They suffered hardships and they had to cope with the sorrow and the constant apprehension of what might happen next to their loved ones.

During my university days, I worked as a nursing aide in repatriation hospitals

with diggers from World War II. I found it difficult to understand why they seemed to talk about the war all the time. I understand now how important a part it played in their lives and how important that mateship was. When I reflect on my time working in those hospitals, I think of people like the man who would sit up late at night and relive those times by holding what had been his leg. He still felt all the pains even though leg had been removed 30 or 40 years earlier. I understand that better now but, as a teenager, I did not understand what he was going through.

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Finally, my lack of understanding about the sacrifices made in war was brought home to me when I discovered only this year that I had a great-uncle who had fought and died on the Western Front in World War I. He died on 8 August 1918 as a result of cannon fire. That was the first day of the victorious Allied assault. It has been very important for me to realise that I have this connection. I am proud of this great-uncle whom I never met and, until this year, knew nothing about. I place on record my thanks to all those who fought and died, and those who worked so hard for this 50th anniversary of victory in the Pacific.

Mr REED (Deputy Chief Minister): Mr Speaker, I take this opportunity to contribute to debate on the Chief Minister's motion relating to Victory in the Pacific Day which we are celebrating. We have just returned from a service at the Cenotaph that was a very poignant reminder of how much this means to all of us. On a day like today, it is sometimes a little difficult to decide what to focus on. To my mind, the service at the Cenotaph and the earlier ceremony, at which certificates were handed to those who contributed to the war effort, crystallised the value of the freedom that we share today. I do not know whether we all cherish it as much as we should, but today brought home to us the value and the enormous cost of that freedom, not only to those who made sacrifices on the battlefield but also to those who contributed so much to the war effort at home, whether as civilians or military. Their efforts have been recognised only in recent years.

Unlike any other Australian city, Darwin was attacked ferociously by the Japanese. Thus, in Darwin on a day such as today, we are even closer to the circumstances of the war than other Australians. To many people here, the service men and women, and civilians who gave their lives on the land that surrounds us are a very poignant reminder of the cost of the liberties that we enjoy now. Today, my mind went also to a number of other areas. I had 2 uncles who served in the war. One served at Pell Airstrip, to the north of Adelaide River, as a member of the Royal Australian Air Force and the other served in South-East Asia as a private in the Australian army.

During the services we attended today, I reflected on the Burma railway in particular. I visited the Burma railway and the bridge on the River Kwai because

that is where my uncle, my father's brother, died with many other Australians in contributing to the war effort, and to the peace and liberties we enjoy now. I could not help thinking today of the awful and unimaginable difficulties that those people faced. The bridge on the River Kwai is one of the better known theatres of war, having been well documented. It is also one of the better known scenes of the hardship that many Australian, British, Dutch and New Zealand prisoners of war faced. It was a moving experience to see the bridge on the River Kwai and evidence of the efforts that went into constructing that bridge.

It was an even more moving experience to visit a place called Hellfire Pass which is a cutting that takes the railway line through the mountain range from Thailand to Burma. The prisoners of war had to work 24 hours a day under the Japanese military regime. The place became known as Hellfire Pass because that is what it looked like at night with the flickering of all the candles and lanterns that provided the light for the prisoners to work by. Hellfire Pass is in a particularly difficult part of the world. From memory, it was late in the year when I visited. Deep in the mountainous tropical jungle of Thailand, it is a most inhospitable place to visit even today. It is very difficult to relate to how it must have been for those men chiselling

away at solid limestone to create a cutting through the range. I understand they used nothing but the most rudimentary of tools, from cold chisels upwards.

Mr Coulter: And hammer and tap.

Mr REED: And a hammer and tap, assisted apparently by meagre amounts of explosives.

The cutting itself is 90 ft or 100 ft deep through solid limestone. It was but one that I visited to gain a better appreciation of what the Australian prisoners of war, particularly my uncle, endured during the war. My uncle is buried at the Kanchanaburi War Cemetery in the city of that name near the bridge on the River Kwai. I visited that war cemetery where, as I recall, in excess of 7000 prisoners of war are buried. They came from Australia, New Zealand, Britain, the United States and Holland. It was very difficult to stand in that war cemetery and try to relate to the difficulties, suffering and pain that those people committed themselves to that we might live in peace. Those thoughts returned to me today.

I thought also of a visit that I made to Kuching in Sarawak a few years ago on behalf of the Northern Territory government. I was walking back to the hotel one evening when a very heavy tropical storm came over, and I took shelter under the verandah of the courthouse whilst I waited for it to pass. Whilst I was sitting there

quietly, an elderly Sarawakian asked me where I was from. I said that I came from Australia, and he said that, but for the Australian army, he would not have been there. I found it a moving experience that, as an Australian in a part of Malaysia that I had not visited before, I should discover a bond with an elderly gentleman whom I had not met before. It illustrated to me that the war did more than achieve peace for Territorians and other Australians to enjoy today. Those who fought so hard and gave their lives for the peace that we enjoy won also an enduring friendship between those countries and our own. That that has lived on for 50 years into the 1990s is a strong indication of what great ambassadors our soldiers, airmen and navy personnel were for our country, quite apart from the commitment that they gave in fighting for their country.

Today, I recalled also remarks made to me many years ago by Damien Miller, a well-known pilot who lived in Alice Springs. I think he flew for Connellan Airlines at one time, and he flew his own aircraft around the central and southern Northern Territory for many years, establishing services to remote areas. He joined the Royal Australian Air Force and served in World War II. Later, when he was a member of the Northern Territory Reserves Board, the precursor to the Conservation Commission, I asked him about his war service. We talked about some of the difficulties he had faced, and I asked him what was the most memorable occasion of the war and the hours that he spent flying. He said by far the most memorable and moving occasion that he could recall was when he was bringing back Australian prisoners of war, just after the end of the war. He was flying Catalinas at the time. They were long flights in a slow aircraft. At last, in reply to one of the ex-prisoners who asked him what was the land they could see, Damien said that their first sight of Australia was Cape Fourcroy on the south-western tip of Bathurst Island. Most of the ex-prisoners of war began to cry because they had come to believe that they would never see Australia again. Putting that into the context of all the things that a bloke like Damien Miller would have gone through, as had so many other pilots, seamen and soldiers of his ilk, it came down to the human touch.

I do not know that we will ever be able to appreciate fully the commitment that those people gave. Too many of them died. Thankfully, many survived. Today, we share a freedom and live in a country for which we should all be very grateful. I do not know about `Australia remembers' but, as the member for Braitling said earlier, `let us never forget'.

Mrs HICKEY (Barkly): Mr Speaker, I too was privileged to attend the ceremony this afternoon. It was a moving ceremony in a beautiful setting. We would do well never to forget the sacrifice those people made for us 50 years ago so that we do not repeat the mistakes of the past.

Earlier today, I participated with people in Tennant Creek in Australia Remembers events. We started with a breakfast in the park that was attended by about 200 people. I place on record my thanks to the members of the Australia Remembers Committee in Tennant Creek, and members of the RSL and the Memorial Club who helped prepare the breakfast and entertain those who attended. Along with people from Tennant Creek, there were those who were visiting or passing through the town. One group, who were staying at the caravan park, had come from Mackay in Queensland. Many were old diggers, retired people, who were delighted to have the opportunity to participate in a commemoration of VP Day. Had there not been events taking place in Tennant Creek, it would have been impossible for them to participate because they were leaving town early in the morning and would not be anywhere within cooee of a service at 11.30 am.

At 11 am, we held a commemoration service at the RSL Club. The speakers were Major Colin Gould, of the Kangaroo '95 force, myself and `Padre Tom', as they call Father Tom Williams, the Anglican minister in Tennant Creek who is also a padre to the forces. All of the speakers talked about what had happened during the war, and the effort and contribution that was made throughout Australia and the world. We focused particularly on Tennant Creek, a small town - even smaller in those days - in the middle of the desert whose people nevertheless contributed what they could, in whatever way they could, to the war effort. Colin Gould recounted a story told to him by one of our residents, Heather Krakouer. Her mother, Clara Mills, was in the Country Women's Association during the war when she was resident in Tennant Creek with her mining husband. All through the war, the ladies of the CWA provided the forces that came through Tennant Creek with refreshments - tea, coffee, scones and so on. Even when the army staging post was moved from Tennant Creek to Bonnie Well for security reasons, every day the women still made the journey on the rough, unmade roads that the convoys went through on, to provide refreshments and a little conversation to the troops. Those were not the only contributions made, but they were significant ones. We did not have the badges that I see other members of the House wearing today. I think they were provided at the ceremony this afternoon. In Tennant Creek, we all wore red, white and blue ribbons - I still have mine on - to mark the colours of the flag that the men and women of Australia served under and continue to serve under today.

People of my generation from an English background have had the privilege of not having known our country at war. However, I think my generation may have missed out on something. Both of my parents served in the Royal Air Force. There is no doubt that the comradeship they found during the war brought them and their colleagues closer together. Those bonds have never been severed. Every year, very proudly, my parents attend the commemoration services and other events. They keep in touch with those members of their

units who are still with us. Although no doubt it was a gruelling experience, I believe that that experience provided for them the stamp of loyalty to their country, their King, and their fellow countrymen. They retain it today - the type of loyalty, bravery and uprightness that we saw among the people who attended this afternoon's commemoration. They are proud people, and people of whom we can be very proud too.

During my youth, there were always reminders of World War II around me in England - and also overseas when I looked at the graves of fallen soldiers there. There was a fairly constant reminder of the sacrifices that had been made on behalf of the next generation. Like most teenagers, I did not really have a full appreciation of what those people had done for us. It behoves us to remember that, if the outcome had been different and we had not been the victors, we would have seen a very different England, a very different Europe and a very different Australia to those countries as they are known and lived in today. We must keep that in the forefront of our minds, even those of us who abhor war and would rather see peace. Peace at any cost is very difficult to attain and retain. In the end, at some points in our lives, even personally, we have to stand and fight. I give thanks, as I know all members of this House do, for the victory courageously achieved 50 years ago that allows us all to live in a country as beautiful and as peaceful as Australia is today. We have problems to which we cannot close our eyes. We have problems in respect of reconciliation with our indigenous people and we see problems around us in other nations. Nevertheless, if this year has done nothing else, it has focused our minds on how privileged we are to have enjoyed the benefits that have been left to us by those who made the sacrifices 50 years ago. Let us never forget them.

Mr STONE (Chief Minister): Mr Speaker, I thank members for their contributions to this debate in support of the motion that recognises the many Australians who contributed to victory in the Pacific some 50 years ago. I have listened with interest to what members have had to say and I listened very carefully to the speeches made today at East Point when certificates of appreciation were presented, not only to veterans but also to those who remained at home and contributed very significantly to the war effort. I have just returned from the Cenotaph where other members of the Assembly participated this evening in the very inspiring ceremony that marked the end of this commemoration. One could hardly call it a celebration. One should never celebrate war but rather commemorate those who made great sacrifices and, in some cases, paid the ultimate price with their lives.

As I said at East Point this afternoon, freedom comes at a price. That price was paid not only by Australians but also by our nearest neighbours. In a number of the speeches, mention was made of the contribution of the people of East Timor, of the

people of the Indonesian islands, of the Ambonese, of the Filipinos, of the Malaysians, of the Singaporeans, and of the Chinese, who suffered particularly at the hands of the Japanese Imperial Army. At the conclusion of World War II, 50 years ago, the theory was that the world was then at peace. Of course, there have been conflicts that have flowed from that time, including the Korean War, the Malayan emergency and the Vietnam War, and we see appalling conflicts still occurring in the region. I thank members for their contributions.

Motion agreed to.

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