

ITALIAN CONSULATE

Mr BROCK (Frome) (12:34): I heard the Leader of the Opposition, and I have to agree 100 per cent with him that this motion has to have bipartisan support. This is a very important issue for the whole of South Australia.

I will speak from my own experience. Port Pirie has a great Italian community and, as other members have mentioned, we need to retain that heritage and culture. Port Pirie is a leader in multiculturalism not only across South Australia but also Australia. Port Pirie also has a very large Greek community. I do not like to have anyone lose their heritage or contact with their own country. My late wife was from Scotland, so I have a great connection with people in Scotland and, even though we do not have a Scottish embassy in Adelaide, I still have fairly good contact with my relatives over there.

Port Pirie has what we call the 'blessing of the fleet', as does Port Adelaide. This year we will celebrate the 80th anniversary of the blessing of the fleet, which celebrates the heritage of the fishermen from Molfetta coming to Australia for a far better life. They chose Port Pirie, and the descendants of those people have now grown in number to 4,000 or 5,000. As a previous speaker indicated, they have become dinky-di Australians. In my previous role as the mayor of the Port Pirie Regional Council, I was very passionate about doing citizenships. I also urged the new citizens of Australia to retain their heritage, to retain their culture, and never to lose that.

As part of getting Australia to be more focused on the national stage, we need also to learn from other people. In terms of my own personal experience with the consul general, I had previous contact with him and his wife. In fact, when the previous consul general's wife gave birth to their first child, my partner, Lyn, and I were in Adelaide and we had the opportunity to congratulate them and to visit them at the consulate. We have had a very close liaison with the consulate over the past seven years.

I understand that all governments, as the Leader of the Opposition indicated this morning, need to look at their expenditure, but I believe that this state needs to be very united in asking the Italian government to reconsider the closure of the Italian Consulate in Adelaide. As other members have indicated, we have that great link. Some people do not have the ability to make phone calls to Italy and things like that; they make contact with their homeland through the consulate.

I will not take up a lot of time, but I think this government and the whole of South Australia needs to be united in urging the Italian government to reconsider the closure of the consulate in Adelaide and to look at the long-term venture. I support the motion of the member for Norwood.