MATTHEW Guy, the state's chirpy and ambitious Planning Minister, feels deeply about an issue few Victorians know about.

Mr Guy recently screened a film for MPs that documented how millions in pre-war Ukraine died in a famine engineered by the Soviet tyrant Joseph Stalin.

Mr Guy has a Ukrainian background on his mother's side. His grandparents lived through the tragedy. “My grandmother wanted her grandchildren to know about it,” he said. “She used to tell me horrendous stories of how people would defend their own food by killing each other because food was such a scarce resource.”

Known by Ukrainians as Holodomor, the famine took place in the early 1930s when Communist authorities exploited a bad harvest to deliberately starve people, many of whom were resisting the collectivisation of their lands.

Impossibly high grain quotas were imposed on farmers, hidden food was confiscated and borders were closed.

Mr Guy, who has visited Ukraine several times, said his grandmother told him how people in cities such as Kharkiv died in the streets.

"And when the snow melted they found all these bodies because people who had starved to death had literally fallen where they stood," he said.

"It's just a horrendous story of what the Communist regime did to people in their own country, and it's a story that needs to be told."

The award-winning documentary, Genocide Revealed, is by Canadian-Ukrainian film-maker Yurij Luhovy, who is visiting Australia. He explained the Holodomor broke the back of the Ukrainian nation because it took place while community leaders such as intellectuals and priests were executed.

“Stalin always feared Ukraine because we always fought for independence. Ukrainians reacted negatively to his collectivisation,” he said.

Luhovy said survivors of the Holodomor in Ukraine still feared consequences if they told their story. "After we filmed interviews they started asking questions about what we're going to do with this footage," he said.

"They still had that fear of the Soviet regime."

The Ukrainian World Congress has called on Australia and other nations to commemorate the 80th anniversary of the Holodomor by passing parliamentary resolutions and calling on their citizens to remember the genocide.

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