



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Federation Chamber

CONSTITUENCY STATEMENTS

Vietnam

SPEECH

Wednesday, 27 May 2015

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Questioner
Speaker Hayes, Chris, MP

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Mr HAYES (Fowler—Chief Opposition Whip) (09:30): This year, 30 April marked the 40th anniversary of the fall of Saigon and the end of the Vietnam War. The Vietnam War was one of the longest conflicts in which Australian troops were involved, with almost 60,000 Australian soldiers, sailors and airmen being deployed in the conflict. Thousands of allied soldiers, including 521 Australians, made the ultimate sacrifice in the name of freedom and liberty for the people of South Vietnam. Their bravery and courage in upholding these noble principles is not only humbling but deeply inspiring.

For many who bore witness to these tragic times, the fall of Saigon was a very sad moment, especially for those who were passionate in their beliefs about freedom and liberty. As a consequence, thousands of Vietnamese people made the extremely dangerous journey through treacherous jungles and by sea to find freedom and rebuild their lives. Australia initially accepted more than 50,000 Vietnamese refugees, who were feeling the weight of persecution, and who made the journey in the hope of a better life for themselves and their children. Today, Australia is proud to be home to more than 200,000 Vietnamese people. Apart from sharing their vibrant culture and traditions with the broader Australian society, Vietnamese Australians have contributed much in all areas of community life. Their achievements should be the source of great pride, particularly given the struggle and hardships that they have had to endure.

As the federal member for Fowler, I am very privileged to have the opportunity to represent the largest Vietnamese community in Australia. I have witnessed, firsthand, their hardworking and generous nature. They have shown themselves to be one of the finest examples of the true Australian spirit, and are immigrants who can be truly very proud.

However, despite their successful settlement in Australia, the Vietnamese people have not forgotten people still living under oppressive rule in their homeland, and they remain passionate about human rights. I joined over 500 Australian Vietnamese at the Australian Vietnam Forces National Memorial in Canberra last month to pay our respects to those who fought and who gave so much in the quest for peace and freedom in Vietnam. Although the Vietnam War is over, the legacy left behind by these patriotic heroes is not forgotten, and we will continue to advocate for freedom and the respect of human rights for the people of Vietnam and, indeed, for all people around the world.