



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

**CONDOLENCES**

**Fraser, Rt Hon. John Malcolm, AC, CH**

**SPEECH**

**Monday, 23 March 2015**

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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## SPEECH

**Date** Monday, 23 March 2015  
**Page** 3115  
**Questioner**  
**Speaker** Hayes, Chris, MP

**Source** House  
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**Responder**  
**Question No.**

**Mr HAYES** (Fowler—Chief Opposition Whip) (12:20): Sadly we have lost two giants of Australian political history within months of each other. Malcolm Fraser was a great Australian, providing six decades of public service and a legacy of helping transform Australia into the inclusive, multicultural nation that it is today. Malcolm Fraser will also be remembered as a great champion of human rights in Australia and around the world and a true warrior for equality. Through his critical role in establishing the Human Rights Commission and his contribution as the founding chairman of Care Australia, Fraser contributed to tackling the challenges of poverty and inequity both here and abroad.

Much has already been said this morning about his commitment to the campaign against apartheid in South Africa, his involvement in drawing attention to the human rights crisis in Rwanda and, more recently, only a few weeks ago, joining in the campaign against capital punishment and attempting to save the lives of two Australians on death row in Indonesia. But it is his contribution to harmony and multiculturalism domestically that will live longest in our national memory. Malcolm Fraser is rightly credited for Australia opening its doors to thousands of Vietnamese who became refugees in the 1970s as a consequence of the Vietnam War. Following the fall of Saigon, which was 40 years ago this coming April, the first wave of Vietnamese fled their homeland driven by hopes of achieving freedom, liberty and a better life for themselves and their families. Now they are referred to as our first boat people. It was Malcolm Fraser that allowed more than 50,000 Vietnamese to start their new lives here in Australia. This was a brave and courageous decision at the time, a decision that was based in compassion, but one which showed great foresight because the many Vietnamese refugees who have made Australia their home are today making a remarkable contribution to this nation.

As a representative of the most multicultural electorate in Australia, with more than 20 per cent of my community being Vietnamese speakers, I am very much aware how highly regarded Malcolm Fraser is. In 2011, Malcolm Fraser attended the Vietnamese Tet festival in Fairfield. More than 10,000 people attended that festival, and unmistakable was the love and respect that the Vietnamese people had for him. Since his passing, I have spoken to many representatives of our local Vietnamese community, who have all expressed great sadness.

I would like to share with the House the thoughts of some of the most prominent members of our Vietnamese community. Dr Thang Ha, president of the Vietnamese Community in Australia, New South Wales chapter, told me that 'the passing of Malcolm Fraser is the saddest news for Vietnamese Australians.' He said, 'Malcolm Fraser acted in accordance with his heart and allowed the first wave of Vietnamese refugees into Australia.' He went on to say, 'The Vietnamese community in Australia is indebted to his generous support and vision for a multicultural society.'

Mr Tri Vo, who is president of the peak Vietnamese body, the Vietnamese Community in Australia, said, 'The Vietnamese Community in Australia will always remember and appreciate the former Prime Minister, Malcolm Fraser, for his courage and compassion in opening Australia's doors and welcoming refugees from Vietnam and Asia, and for his support for multiculturalism.' In this community, many have also spoken of him as a father. They will mourn him not just as a leader but as a family member.

My final words are for the family of Malcolm Fraser. On behalf of a very grateful community and a most grateful nation, I offer my sincere condolences to Malcolm Fraser's wife, Tamie, and to their children and grandchildren. Our thoughts and prayers are with them.