



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Federation Chamber

ADJOURNMENT

Calwell Electorate

SPEECH

Thursday, 13 February 2014

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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Questioner
Speaker Vamvakinou, Maria, MP

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Ms VAMVAKINO (Calwell) (12:29): I am very pleased to stand here today to speak about some wonderful events and accomplishments that have taken place in my electorate of Calwell—specifically, on Australia Day this year. I would like to begin by congratulating my constituent Nazim Erdem, who lives in Roxburgh Park, who was awarded the Medal of the Order of Australia in the General Division. The award that Nazim received is an acknowledgement of a very inspiring life of determination and enthusiasm. Nazim was just 20 years old when his life changed forever as a result of diving off a pier into shallow water and breaking his neck. Days after the accident, he was told that he would never walk again. Now, at the age of 43, Nazim has shown that that injury and that prognosis has never defined him and has never prevented him from living his life to the full. He is a former amateur boxer and an Aussie Rules player. Nazim took up wheelchair rugby while in rehabilitation, and since then has gone on to become a gold medallist and a Paralympic champion. Nazim's accomplishments are, of course, too many to mention here today, but it is sufficient to say that he does not let anything stand in his way. I believe that his courage and determination play an important role in contributing to Australia's growth as a strong, cohesive nation based on respect, fairness and inclusion. Nazim is very much an example of human triumph against all odds.

I also had the pleasure of taking part in the annual Australia Day citizenship ceremony, on this occasion at Hume City Council—my electorate also covers the Brimbank City Council. The Australia Day ceremony at Hume City Council saw the welcoming of 122 new Australian citizens to the electorate.

The Hume Citizen of the Year went to Kevin O'Callaghan and Hume Young Citizen of the Year went to Michael Zerafa. Kevin O'Callaghan is a long-time resident of Craigieburn and he is a founding member of the Craigieburn SES unit. It was Kevin who identified an opportunity for volunteers to be trained to help in medical emergencies when an ambulance was not available in the suburb. So, under Kevin's vision and leadership, the community emergency response teams became a reality, with a pilot program commencing in Craigieburn in 1996. The CERT program is now so valued in the broader community that Ambulance Victoria has established 30 teams across the state, saving countless lives. Kevin is also on the Craigieburn Anzac Day organising committee which now runs an annual service that is attended by more than 1,500 people each year.

I also want to congratulate the Hume Young Citizen of the Year, Michael Zerafa. Michael is an aspiring boxer and is known in our local community for dedicating his life to inspiring others to lead healthier and more active lives. Michael represented Australia in boxing at the 2010 Commonwealth Games in Delhi. His professional career has seen him win 13 fights. He is undefeated and currently ranked fourth in Australia. Michael is a fine example for young people in Hume and has a long association with mentoring young people and acting as a community leader.