



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

**Federation Chamber**

**STATEMENTS ON INDULGENCE**

**Yunupingu, Dr M**

**SPEECH**

**Monday, 17 June 2013**

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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## SPEECH

**Date** Monday, 17 June 2013  
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**Questioner**  
**Speaker** Macklin, Jenny, MP

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

**Ms MACKLIN** (Jagajaga—Minister for Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs and Minister for Disability Reform) (16:54): The Yolngu people of north-east Arnhem Land have lost a great leader. A wife lost a husband and six daughters lost their father. Australia lost a towering figure of contemporary music, culture and politics, and a great advocate for justice for Indigenous Australians right across the country. We lost a great teacher, who shared his wisdom not only with the students at Yirrkala Community School but with all of us.

Through the music of Yothu Yindi, Yunupingu introduced many of us to the lives, the history, the language and the culture of the Yolngu people of north-east Arnhem Land. He taught us that their culture was strong and a source of great pride. He taught us about the beauty of his country, the sacred bond between the Yolngu and the land of their ancestors, and about the great struggle of his people to protect that country for future generations.

For many Australians, it was the first insight we had into that far-off world. Yunupingu's strength is that he was a great bridge-builder between our worlds. Gently, he opened our eyes and helped give rise to a new understanding between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians, teaching us that a new relationship was possible and that together we could build a better future for all Australians.

Like all great teachers, Yunupingu imparted his wisdom with patience, tolerance, kindness and warmth, whether through lessons in the classroom, where he became a pioneering educator; on the stage, where he took Yolngu music and culture to mainstream audiences around the world; or at the Garma Festival of Traditional Cultures, which he established with his wife to build bridges between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians.

With his passing, we pay tribute to his legacy and, of course, recommit ourselves to achieving his vision: to take what he has taught us and put it to use for the benefit of Indigenous people around Australia, to continue our work to close the gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people, and to ensure that we build a reconciled Australia, based on mutual regard and respect. I believe that recognising Indigenous people in our Constitution will be a significant part of this reconciliation—and I know that he did too—helping us, together, to forge a stronger future, and one that he would be proud of.