

BÀI NÓI CHUYỆN CỦA BÁC SĨ NGUYỄN MẠNH TIẾN, CT. BCH. CĐNVTD/LBUC TẠI BUỔI TIỆC ĐÁNH DẤU 30 NĂM ĐỊNH CƯ CỦA NGƯỜI VIỆT TẠI QUỐC HỘI LIÊN BANG CANBERRA, NGÀY 25-05-2005.

The Hon. John Howard, Prime Minister

The Hon. Kim Beazley, Leader of the Opposition

The Hon. Peter McGauran, Minister for Multicultural Affairs and Citizenship

Our special guest, the Hon. Michael MacKellar, former Minister for Immigration and Ethnic Affairs

Members of the House of Representatives and the Senate

Presidents of State and Territory Chapters of the VCA

Religious Leaders and representatives of Vietnamese Australian organisations

Distinguished guests

Ladies and Gentlemen

On behalf of the Vietnamese Community in Australia (VCA), I would like to welcome all the parliamentarians, media representatives and the hundreds of people from the Vietnamese Australian community, many from far away places, for being here with us today.

I thank our community's good friends, The Hon Peter Mac Gauran, Minister for Multicultural Affairs and Citizenship, The Hon

Alan Cadman MP for Mitchell, and Mr. Michael Hatton MP for Blaxland, for kindly hosting this reception to mark 30 years of Vietnamese settlement in Australia. I also thank Bich Phan, Cong Le and Henry Dang, who have put out so much time and efforts to make this Reception possible.

It is a great honour for Vietnamese Australians to have their contributions to this wonderful country officially recognised today in Parliament House, the heart of our nation's democracy.

This is an opportunity for us to express our gratitude to Australians for their support since the door to this country was opened to

Vietnamese refugees in 1975. Without a doubt, this is due to the generosity of the Australian people and the Australian government, and particularly to the hard work of key people such as the then Minister for Immigration and Ethnic Affairs, the Hon Michael MacKellar, who is here with us today.

I look back at the past 30 years with amazement and pride. In such a short time, the Vietnamese community has grown from a small group of bewildered new comers to a confident and proud community, integrating successfully into Australian society.

I'd like to pay tribute to the efforts of thousands of volunteers, who over the years have helped build the VCA to become a large organisation as it is today, elected to represent the Vietnamese Australians throughout Australia.

No doubt, there are thousands of other Vietnamese Australian quiet achievers who in their own ways have been contributing to our flourishing culture and society. I'd like to thank all those who have made contributions big and small to Australia.

We are all Australians now, and we see Australia as much our own country as any others'. We are determined to work hard to continue to build and strengthen the unique multicultural fabric of our nation that has successfully and equally embraced people from all ethnic backgrounds.

The achievements of many Vietnamese Australians in a range of areas have been recognised with a variety of prestigious awards over the years: The Most Venerable Thich Phuoc Hue OAM for services in religion and charity, Mr Quang Luu AO for services in multicultural broadcasting, Dr My Van Tran AM for her services to Australia-Asia relations and reaping multiculturalism, Dr Cuong Bui and Mr Viet Tran OAM for community services, Dr Hung Nguyen CSIRO 1999 Medal for his work in biotechnology, just to name a few.

We take great pride in the achievements of our community's young members: last year Thao Nguyen was chosen to represent Australia's youth at the United Nations General Assembly in New York, and this year Khoa Do was named the Young Australian of the Year. I am extremely pleased to say that in recent years, an increasing number of young Vietnamese are becoming involved in community activities, and many of them are here today. To them I say: Congratulations, you have made all of us proud, and we can rest assured that our community's future is in safe hands.

An aspect of Vietnamese Australians we would like to share with the wider Australian community is their willingness to help others. Despite our modest community size and wealth, our members have generously donated to help victims of disasters such as the NSW Bush Fire in 2001 and the tsunami crisis last Christmas. Having gone through a great deal of loss and pain ourselves, we empathise with other victims' sufferings and try our best to help ease their pain.

While being proud of our achievements, we know that our community also has its problems and challenges like all other sections of society. We actively and squarely confront them, and in partnership with government agencies and other non-government organisations we are making some headway in these areas.

Vietnamese Australians are very lucky indeed to have survived the Vietnam war, the post-war communist oppression, and then the perilous sea journeys searching for freedom. Now, in Australia, we enjoy the democracy and the human rights that we risked our lives to seek. In contrast, our relatives and friends in Vietnam today are still ruled by the Communist Party's totalitarian regime. This regime imprisons and kills religious leaders, writers, journalists and intellectuals. This regime is one of the most corrupt in the world and its officials continue to monetise benefits while most people live in poverty.

Let me share with you this important thought: It IS in Australia's national interest to help Vietnam obtain a free and democratic society. Why? Because a free and democratic Vietnam would be more transparent and accountable, attracting more domestic and international investment, making it a more reliable and worthwhile trading partner to Australia.

Therefore, we earnestly urge our Australian government to pressure the Hanoi regime for positive changes and to stop oppressing the people.

For instance, we think an audit should be conducted to ensure that Australia's 70 plus million dollar annual aid to Vietnam benefits the poor, not corrupt officials. We also think it is fair and in our national interest for Australia to insist that before joining the WTO, the Hanoi regime must allow Australia to export cultural goods to Vietnam. Presently, books, newspapers, and music products can go from Vietnam to Australia, but not the other way around. Our exporters have been missing out on a big market, because many of the 80 million Vietnamese appreciate and enjoy Australian cultural products.

On behalf of all Vietnamese Australians, I would like to again thank the Australian people, federal and state governments past and present, and non-government organisations.

Thank you for your ongoing support in the fight for freedom and democracy for Vietnam, our country of origin which remains close to our hearts.

Thank you for letting us be your neighbours. Thank you for letting us be your co-workers. We are determined to work hard with fellow Australians to continue cultivating this wonderful Australian land of ours.

B.S. NGUYỄN MẠNH TIẾN



**B.S. Nguyễn Mạnh Tiến nhận Huân
Chương OAM (Order of Australia Medal)
do Bà Toàn Quyền Marie Bashir trao tặng
nhân ngày Australia Day, 25-01-2005.**