



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

**PROOF**

**Main Committee**

**PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS**

**Religious Freedom and Democracy in Vietnam**

**SPEECH**

**Monday, 17 August 2009**

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

---

## SPEECH

<b>Date</b> Monday, 17 August 2009	<b>Source</b> House
<b>Page</b> 105	<b>Proof</b> Yes
<b>Questioner</b>	<b>Responder</b>
<b>Speaker</b> Ripoll, Bernie, MP	<b>Question No.</b>

---

**Mr RIPOLL** (Oxley) (7.51 pm)—It is a pleasure to speak on the motion moved by the member for Cowan. I have many Vietnamese people in my electorate. I have always taken a particular interest in looking after their domestic interests, looking at issues here and in Vietnam which affect them. It is good to see other people in this place taking up some of these issues, talking about human rights and looking at the circumstances and situations which arise in Vietnam, and at the conditions of Vietnamese people in Australia.

The Venerable Thich Quang Do is no stranger to me. On a number of occasions, I have not only spoken about him but also written to the ambassador and taken it upon myself to talk to my local community about his circumstances in Vietnam. The Socialist Republic of Vietnam has progressed over many years. I believe it has moved forward. The evolutionary process which is taking place in Vietnam is a great one and a good one. It is something that all the people of Vietnam should be congratulated on. They are certainly working hard to gain further freedom of speech, religion, media and a range of other matters.

While congratulating all the members who are speaking on this motion tonight, I also take the opportunity to say that the circumstances of the Venerable Thich Quang Do are not unique. There are many other such people in Vietnam and in other parts of the world—these are not isolated circumstances. In fact, all countries, I believe, should take a much closer look at their own human rights right across the board. It is important to acknowledge these things and to continue a particular dialogue.

Tonight I want to make note of the fact that countries such as Australia, through diplomatic channels, through people-to-people channels and through government-to-government channels, continue to have a dialogue, a working conversation, about human rights, about individuals and about progressive involvement. That happens on a number of levels. I am quite proud of the work Australia has done over many years. I congratulate the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Stephen Smith, for his continuing work with the Socialist Republic of Vietnam. That work has been done over a period of years, by consecutive governments. Through foreign aid, grants and exchanges we have contributed to continuing development, particularly in human rights. I also note that today we had in the Senate a delegation from the Socialist Republic of Vietnam. We have many delegations from Vietnam. There seems to be a very healthy exchange and the more the better. The more we can expose officials from Vietnam the more they will gain an appreciation for the benefits of opening up their own economy, their own systems and their people to freedoms of religion, speech and media, all the things we take for granted in this country which are not so easily attained in other places.

I also want to mention the great work of the Vietnamese people here in Australia. I know firsthand, through the Vietnamese community in my electorate, that they are a hardworking, highly spirited, adventurous community who are prepared to take risks. They are prepared to open up small businesses. They are prepared to work hard. They are very much committed to their children and to education. They are very much committed to their church and their faith. And it is a broad faith, whether it is Buddhism, as was mentioned by the member for Cowan, or Cao Dai, Taoism or Catholicism. Whatever faith they have, I think that is one of the strengths of the Vietnamese people. While the majority may be Buddhist, there are many other religions in Vietnam. From time to time, there are issues, particularly for people from the north of Vietnam. So I take note of the motion and continue to speak on behalf of Vietnamese Australians and also those in Vietnam, particularly people like Thich Quang Do, who I think is a great representative of his people and his faith. I commend the motion to the House.