

9 December 2009

Nationals' branch begins campaign for democracy in Vietnam

The Queanbeyan-Jerrabomberra branch of the NSW Nationals has supported a resolution expressing concern about human rights violations in the Socialist Republic of Vietnam.

The resolution, endorsed by the branch members at last night's meeting, reads:-

The Queanbeyan-Jerrabomberra Branch of the NSW Nationals:

a) expresses concerns about the continued imprisonment of people, including religious leaders, on matters of conscience in the Socialist Republic of Vietnam;

b) calls on the Australian Government to strongly urge the Government of Vietnam to:

- i. immediately and unconditionally release all political prisoners and prisoners of conscience.*
- ii. introduce basic human rights to Vietnam, including freedom of assembly, religious worship and speech, a free press and free and open elections;*
- iii. provide for the creation of a pluralist free enterprise economy; and*
- iv. demonstrate to the people of Australia how and where aid monies provided to Vietnam by Australia are spent and how that aid encourages the cultivation of a more democratic and free society in Vietnam.*

Branch Chairman, George Lemon, said that if a similar resolution was carried in Vietnam today the perpetrators of the resolution would most likely be harassed by government officials and perhaps even imprisoned.

"Vietnamese citizens are not allowed to belong to a political organisation unless it is the Communist Party and they can not assemble to discuss or debate political issues," Mr Lemon said

"Pro-democracy dissidents, journalists, bloggers and religious leaders are harassed and physically abused simply because they have campaigned peacefully for freedom, democracy and human rights for Vietnam."

"The Hanoi Communist Government has become so desperate it has followed China's lead by blocking social web sites such as Facebook.

"Vietnam is creating its own version of the Berlin Wall, only it's a web version, so it can try and prevent its citizens from discussing human rights and democracy."

Mr Lemon added it was very disappointing that present and past Australian Governments have only been interested in engaging Vietnam on trade and economics and not on human rights issues.

“In September, Prime Minister Kevin Rudd rolled out the red carpet for the General Secretary of the Communist Party of Vietnam, HE Nong Duc Manh. In his speech at a banquet in the Australian Parliament, the Labor Party Prime Minister lavished praise on Mr Nong and on his brutal regime but did not once raise concerns about the Communist country’s appalling human rights record, he said.

A copy of the motion will be sent to Prime Minister Rudd and also the Vietnamese Embassy in Canberra.

“We have witnessed before how people-power movements can bring about positive change. The Queanbeyan-Jerrabomberra branch of the Nationals has now joined this people-power movement to bring about democracy in Vietnam,” Mr Lemon said.

“I call on other political party branches across Australia to join us in campaigning for democracy in Vietnam.”

Ends...George Lemon 0411 06 2682