



Speech by

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MEMBER FOR LOGAN

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VIETNAMESE COMMUNITY IN QUEENSLAND

Mr MICKEL (Logan—ALP) (7.17 p.m.): In recent weeks there has been much publicity in relation to the drug problem which has been identified with a particular ethnic group in this State—namely, the Vietnamese community. This publicity has reached the sensationalist stage, with allegations by an Ipswich councillor that the problem may make the south-west of Brisbane similar to Cabramatta in Sydney.

Whilst these comments are meant to grab the headlines, they ignore the efforts made by large sections of the Vietnamese community who are doing so much to ensure that their members are making a valuable contribution to our State. I mentioned last year in this House that I had the pleasure of attending a function hosted by the Vietnamese Women's Chapter who were celebrating their 10th year of operation in helping women in the Vietnamese community in Queensland.

I also attended on behalf of the Minister for Education a function at which the Vietnamese community were thanking their teachers in Queensland for the help that they had given to Vietnamese children by assisting them to become better Queenslanders. Today we find that the Vietnamese community is represented in a whole series of Government and commercial positions and are contributing to our export performance and to the vibrancy of our business community.

It must be acknowledged that some ethnic communities have been adversely affected because of the widely publicised activities of some individuals in that community. It is no secret that some of these activities have unfortunately been centred on the south-west of Brisbane. But the Vietnamese community cannot be singled out, because any number of studies will show that the Vietnamese community is one of our most law-abiding communities. The problems of the Vietnamese community are shared with other migrant groups. They sometimes share the problems of language and certainly culture. This impairs their ability to settle effectively and integrate into the wider community.

But within the Vietnamese community many people have settled successfully and integrated into the wider Australian community and are successful people in their own right. They understand and can identify with the problems and barriers faced by migrants but, more than that, they have done much to help their communities.

Tonight, I want to particularly mention the Nguyen family, whom I have known for over 15 years. When I was a schoolteacher in the suburb of Inala, I had the privilege and honour of being able to meet the first wave of Vietnamese migrants who were brought into this country under the Fraser Government's policy. The Nguyen family were part of that first wave. One of those people in particular, Bichthuy Nguyen, whom I have known for over 15 years, came here as a very young child. She and her family have now made their way and are making an important contribution to Queensland's legal and commercial centres.

As I said, she and her now husband, Hung Nguyen, have been known to me for over 15 years. However, tonight I want to highlight the special contribution that they have made in the Vietnamese community in helping young people. In 1988, together they established the Vietnamese Youth Club in Queensland with the key objective of assisting Vietnamese youth to settle and integrate within the wider Australian community. Under their leadership, the youth club provided much-needed services to numerous Vietnamese youth in Queensland, including assistance with accessing mainstream

education and training and, vitally, helping them to find employment. They also provided much assistance to the wider Vietnamese community through accessing and managing numerous community and Government programs designed to assist migrants, including the Migrant Settlement Program and the Migrant Job Placement Program. So they have a long history of trying to make better conditions and job prospects for the Vietnamese community. After all, the best social service we can provide anyone is the ability to get a job and retain that job. In that way, the whole of our society can progress.

When discussing some of the ethnic problems that unfortunately have surfaced in recent weeks, it is people such as these and other professionals and committed individuals in migrant communities around the State whose efforts should not go unrecognised. I am happy to say that my son now goes to school with a relative of the Nguyens. Mrs Kim Nguyen's son and my son go to a school that encourages all children to be treated fairly and equally. In the process, they have handed down to the next generation of people the same compassion and the same sense of fairness that was given to them when they first came to Australia.

We can ask for no better than that future generations grow up in a law-abiding way, in a way that will not only make a significant contribution to the wider Queensland public but also to those special ethnic groups whom they have looked after. So I want to congratulate the Nguyen family who, as I have said, have been friends of mine for years for the significant role that they have played personally. They are the unrecognised heroes who have worked so tirelessly to make the State a better place for all Queenslanders.
