




Speech By
Hon. Scott Emerson

MEMBER FOR INDOOROOPILLY

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ADJOURNMENT

Greste, Mr P

 **Hon. SA EMERSON** (Indooroopilly—LNP) (Minister for Transport and Main Roads) (7.00 pm): I rise to voice my support for jailed foreign correspondent Peter Greste, whose parents, Juris and Lois, are my constituents. Juris and Lois have fond memories of Peter growing up in Indooroopilly before he became the man behind the headlines. He has always been a high achiever, and as a boy he was an active member of the Indooroopilly scouting ranks. In year 12 he was school captain of Indooroopilly High. He received many awards including Lions Club Youth of the Year and a Rotary international exchange scholarship. Peter studied journalism at QUT and went on to establish a distinguished career as a foreign correspondent.

On 23 June this year we watched on as Peter and his two Al Jazeera colleagues were sentenced to seven years in jail. Being a parent myself, I can only imagine what Juris and Lois are going through now. I met with them both recently. Neither one has slowed their efforts to secure their son's release and clear his name. They maintain Peter's innocence, and I agree. As a former journalist, I find the case incredibly concerning. Journalists are integral in maintaining accountability and transparency in politics. Journalism is not a crime. I believe every country, including Egypt, deserves a free press. Journalists like Peter must be able to report from places like the Middle East without the risk of a conviction. I commend him and his family for fighting so hard for this cause.

It is encouraging to see that the support for Peter and his parents goes well beyond the borders of Indooroopilly. My federal colleagues including the Prime Minister, Tony Abbott; Foreign Affairs Minister Julie Bishop; Attorney-General George Brandis; and Australia's ambassador to Egypt, Dr Ralph King, have all made representations to the Egyptian authorities. The federal parliament recently passed a motion commending the government for its continued representations on Peter's behalf. The motion was sponsored by the member for Ryan, Jane Prentice, and received full bipartisan support. The Egyptian government can be left in no doubt that Australia supports an expedited appeals process for Peter. Peter has received thousands of letters from his supporters, but he is still only able to send two prison approved letters every month. In his second letter from Tora Prison, Peter wrote—

Journalists are never supposed to become the story. Apart from the print reporter's byline or the broadcaster's sign-off, we are supposed to remain in the background as witnesses to or agents for the news; never as its subject.

Supporters across Australia and the world will continue to rally behind Peter Greste, and I am pleased to be adding my voice to that campaign. Journalism is not a crime. It never has been and definitely is not the case in the case of Peter Greste and his Al Jazeera colleagues.