



Speech By
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MEMBER FOR MOUNT OMMANEY

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ADJOURNMENT

Mount Ommaney Electorate, Iranian and Eritrean Communities

 **Ms PUGH** (Mount Ommaney—ALP) (9.26 pm): I rise tonight to give a voice to my Iranian community, which has raised grave concerns with me about the thousands of Iranians who have been killed in the last few months in Iran under the cover of an internet blackout. I understand that the number of deaths is not yet clear because of the media blackout that has been imposed on citizens, which means that the world's media have scarce information about what is unfolding. What I share tonight has come directly from the residents of my community as they grapple with uncertainty, the loss of their loved ones and the fear of speaking out, all compounded by the difficulty of getting accurate information about what is happening in their homeland. They wait for contact from their loved ones so they can once again be assured that they are safe—for now.

I have spoken before in this House after the death of Mahsa Amini, a young woman who lost her life in Iran. When I talk with my Iranian community they are scared. They are afraid of retribution and scared to speak up in case it results in retaliation against family or friends back home. When I speak to them I hear over and over again that they have lost family members—many of them—in recent protests and they are terribly afraid that there is more to come. I want to share the words of Penny Wong, who said, 'We condemn the repression against the brave people of Iran, who continue to courageously demand the respect of their fundamental rights and to express their aspiration for democratic change.' I stand with our Iranian community as I always have, and I always will.

I was also honoured to attend an Australia Day celebration for the Eritrean community. Our Eritrean community has made such a significant contribution to our Queensland community, so we came together to celebrate that contribution and celebrate Australia Day together. I understand that Eritrea has one of the worst freedom of the press rankings in the world as ranked by the organisation Reporters Without Borders. They are literally one of the worst in the world. Despite this ongoing oppression of the people of Eritrea, the event was one of hope and resilience, with young law graduate Mohammed speaking about the opportunity afforded to him by Australia. Of course, no event for the Eritrean community would be complete without a few words of hope and inspiration from the wonderful Mama Saba.

Despite the severe challenges faced by both of these communities, their message is one of hope—hope that circumstances in their homelands will improve and hope that their chosen home of Australia will wrap their arms around them in their time of need.