



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

PROOF

Federation Chamber

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

Australia-Serbia Relations

SPEECH

Monday, 20 August 2012

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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<p>Date Monday, 20 August 2012 Page 154 Questioner Speaker Hayes, Chris, MP</p>	<p>Source House Proof Yes Responder Question No.</p>
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Mr HAYES (Fowler) (13:02): I wish to speak about Australia's relationship with the Republic of Serbia and the contribution that people of Serbian origin make to our vibrant multicultural community. Serbia's good relationship with Australia has been facilitated by a significant migration of people from Serbian origin to Australia. They have made a tremendous contribution and great inroads to our society. The Serbian community primarily started arriving in Australia at the conclusion of the Second World War. Currently, there are over 100,000 people of Serbian origin living in Australia. Interestingly, five per cent of the Serbian population in Australia live in my electorate of Fowler. Serbian is one of the top five languages spoken in my electorate, following Vietnamese, Arabic, Cantonese and Khmer.

Members of the Serbian community throughout my electorate make a significant and valued contribution in a range of areas. Serbian people are often very keen sportsmen and women, which is evident in the national success in respect of tennis, basketball, water polo and many other sports. As a result of their passion for sport and physical activity, a number of Serbian sporting organisations presently operate with strength in my electorate.

The Bonnyrigg Sports Club is one of the largest sports clubs in my electorate, with entertainment facilities and two sports clubs operating within it. There is the Bonnyrigg White Eagles Football Club, with President Jovan Prlic, and the Bonnyrigg FC, which is the juniors club, with President Dragan Mandic. The Bonnyrigg White Eagles currently play in the NSW Telechoice Premier League, while the junior FC is a very successful part of the Southern Districts Junior Soccer Association.

I have had the opportunity on a number of occasions to meet with the general manager of the club, Jason Woods, and with the club president, Jovan Cubrilo. I am aware of the very positive contribution that members of the Bonnyrigg Sports Club, particularly the Serbian youth of my area, make to our community.

Only recently I attended the 26th Serbian Folkloric Festival held at the club. The festival is a very large three-day event that celebrates Serbian tradition through food, song and dance and various other forms of entertainment for young and old to enjoy. More than 1,000 children from all around Australia and overseas participated in the folkloric dancing, proudly displaying the traditions of their parents and grandparents. The event was attended by a number of members of the Serbian community as well as their guests, including the Serbian Orthodox Bishop for Australia and New Zealand, His Grace the Right Reverend Irinej; the Serbian Ambassador to Australia, Her Excellency Neda Maletic, who is actually sitting in the gallery today; and a number of state members of parliament, including the member for Cabramatta, Mr Nick Lalich, himself a Serbian immigrant to this country. We were all highly impressed by the hospitality which was shown to us as well as the colour, vibrancy and positive spirit displayed by the Serbian community, showcasing their culture and their traditions.

The Obilic Basketball Club was founded in 1999, consisting of players from across my electorate. The name is derived from the famous medieval Serbian hero Milos Obilic, who was renowned for his heroic actions during the famous Battle of Kosovo in 1389. Many local members of the Obilic Basketball Club are former or current players in the New South Wales basketball league or the Australian basketball association. I want to acknowledge the hard work and dedication of Stevan Sipka, the club president, for establishing and leading the Obilic Basketball Club. The management committee members—including my very good friend Alex Glumac, the club's media officer, as well as Zoran Salipur, Aleks Kuzmanovic, Sveto Gavrilovic, Milos Prlic and Milan Vasiljevic—need to be commended for the hard work they do in providing opportunities for the young people in my area who want to engage in basketball. The Obilic club will be hosting the 2012 Draza Mihailovic Cup, a Serbian diaspora basketball tournament played annually in cities throughout Australia. I wish the Obilic club all the very best in this very competitive event.

Besides sport, food and dance, religion and the preservation of culture are very important to Serbian Australians. I need to say how active this community is. There are two Serbian Orthodox churches in my electorate: the Serbian Orthodox Mission of St Luke the Apostle in Liverpool, led by Reverend Father Aleksandar Milutinovic, and the

Serbian Orthodox Church of St George in Cabramatta with Father Djuro Djurdjevic. I have had the opportunity of visiting both of these churches for masses and seeing how very significant they are in shepherding the needs of the Serbian community.

I also recently attended the Orthodox saint's day celebration of St Nikolaja Zickog organised by the Serbian National Defence Council in Canley Vale. I appreciated being invited to attend such a significant day in the calendar of the Serbian Orthodox Church, and enjoyed immensely participating in a very, very large traditional Serbian banquet. I want to take this opportunity to acknowledge my very good friend Milovan—'Misha', as we know him—Karajcic and his supportive wife Boja. Misha is the President of the Serbian National Defence Council, a Serbian community organisation in my electorate. I wish him well in the next council elections in a couple of weeks' time.

I thank him for keeping me up to date about the local Serbian community and making me feel welcome on each occasion I attend.

Last week I spoke on the customs tariff amendment bill in this place, which will allow Serbia to have preferential treatment when it comes to trade with Australia. This amendment to the Customs Act will undoubtedly facilitate growth in trade and greater cooperation between our two countries. Despite being worth just over \$14 million, trade between Australia and the Republic of Serbia has grown rapidly. It rose by almost 24 per cent over the last 12 months alone.

The cooperation between Australia and Serbia extends well beyond economic and people relationships. Increasingly, there has been significant collaboration between Australia and Serbia in the area of law enforcement and fighting transnational crime. This cooperation was furthered earlier this year with a visit by the then Serbian Deputy Prime Minister the Hon. Ivica Dacic. I had the opportunity to meet with him personally and see the product of his work. His visit resulted in the signing of a memorandum of agreement between the Australian Federal Police and the Serbian Police on cooperation in tackling transnational crime, particularly in relation to drug trafficking.

The Republic of Serbia has certainly done a great deal to develop into a modern, democratic society with positive and expanding relationships not only in its own immediate region but throughout Europe and the world and, very fortunately, with us here in Australia. Through the enthusiastic efforts of the hardworking Serbian Ambassador to Australia, Her Excellency Neda Maletic, the other representatives of her mission and the Serbian representatives in our community, the relationship between Australia and the Republic of Serbia is not only great but it is developing on a daily basis.

Serbia has an ancient culture and traditions observed by the young and by the young at heart. The Ambassador is a very strong and compassionate voice for the Serbian community across Australia. As well as furthering the good relationships between Australia and the Serbian Republic, you are not only fostering people's culture and retention of their traditions but positively developing the relationships between our two great nations. (*Time expired*)