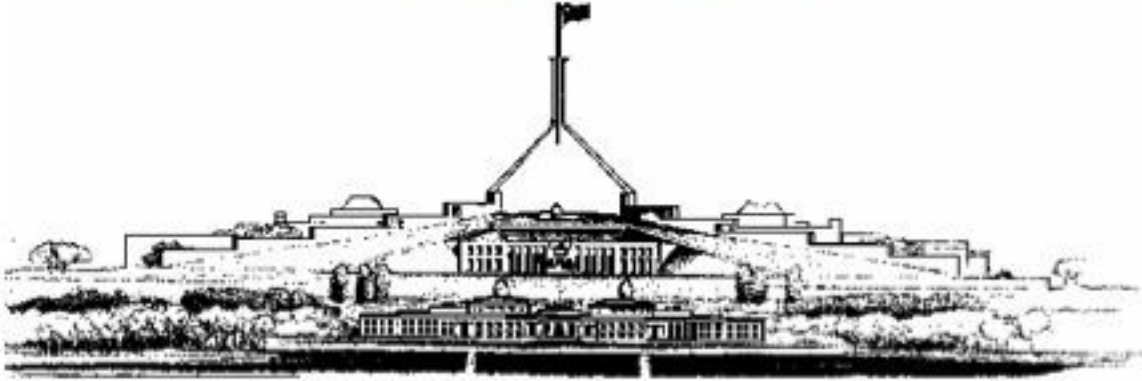




COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



THE SENATE

ADJOURNMENT

Australian Capital Territory

Republic Day of India

SPEECH

Tuesday, 2 February 2016

SPEECH

Senator SESELJA (Australian Capital Territory) (19:20): I am really pleased to rise this evening to speak about a couple of events here in the ACT. We all know that 26 January is Australia Day but it is also Republic Day in India. Whilst it is important that we reflect on that day as Australia Day it is also important that we reflect on this significant day for our Indian residents, many of whom reside here in Canberra.

Though India became a free nation on 15 August 1947, it declared itself a sovereign, democratic and republic state with the adoption of its constitution on 26 January 1950. Its constitution gave the citizens of India the power to choose their own government and paved the way for democracy. We have much in common with our Indian friends. India shares our democratic political system and commitment to freedom. Whilst it is a republic, we also share some of the same British roots. We share interests, values and a great love of cricket. We have significant trade. We enjoy large flows of tourists and students. Australia is increasingly and importantly a net energy provider for the almost 1.3 billion citizens of India.

Importantly, many Indians are part of our national story, having taken up Australian citizenship. Their contribution is evident in the impact the Indian community have made here in the ACT. I want to thank the India-Australia Association of Canberra for inviting me to join them in celebrating their national day. I would like to thank particularly the organisers and members of the executive committee, including Nishi Puri, Hasib Khan, Sandipan Mitra, Kranti Amar, Gurjant Singh, Lakshmi Singh, Nitu Mitra, Prabha Gupta, Sanjeev Sood and Shashi Amar. The president of FINACT, Amardeep Singh, was also in attendance. FINACT does such a great job representing all of the Indian Australian associations here in the ACT. I want to commend them on their continuing involvement in our community and to pass on my best wishes, as I did on the day they celebrated their 67th Republic Day. I would like to also comment on the fact that a former president of FINACT here in the ACT, Jacob Vadakkedathu, was an outstanding candidate for the ACT Liberal Party in the 2012 election. He continues to make a great contribution to our community.

One final thing on this is that, as I said in my speech on the day, while there are many things that unite us as nations, one of the things that I am most impressed about with our Indian community here in Canberra is their wonderful commitment to family, to community and to their culture. That commitment and that contribution to Canberra and to Australia is something certainly worth celebrating and commending.