



Submission No 6

Inquiry into Australia's Human Rights Dialogues with China and Vietnam

Name:

Luke Donnellan MP
State Member for Narre Warren North

Shadow Minister for Child Safety
Shadow Minister for Sport and Recreation
Parliament of Victoria



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Committee Secretary
Joint Standing Committee on
Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade
Department of House of Representatives
PO Box 6021 Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

21 July 2011

Dear Secretary and Committee,

RE: Human Rights Dialogues with China and Vietnam

I write to express my ongoing concerns in regards to the Vietnamese authorities' treatment of religious groups and leaders, as well as the authorities' treatment of political opposition and democracy and human rights campaigners.

I visited Vietnam in 2006 in what turned out to be a rather eventful expedition. The primary focus of my visit was to highlight the case of [redacted]. Although [redacted] has trained as a priest, he has never been formally recognised by the local authorities. [redacted] has been imprisoned for in excess of 15 years for his role in the Vietnamese democracy movement [redacted].

[redacted] Naturally, being that the Vietnamese Government requires all religious groups and activities to officially register, [redacted] movements and our meetings were restricted and watched very closely by the authorities.

In 2007 [redacted] was arrested, his office ransacked and his computers and records confiscated. [redacted]

[redacted] In [redacted] suffered from a stroke in custody and has since been released to undergo medical treatment. However, there is concern in Vietnam and around the world that [redacted] will be imprisoned again as soon as his treatment concludes.

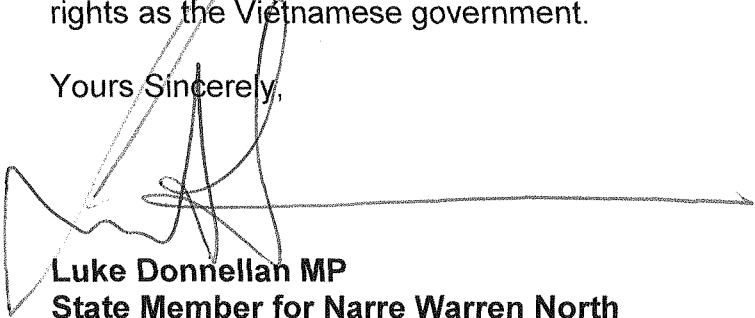
Separately, [redacted] was sentenced to seven years imprisonment for his peaceful calls for a multiparty political system in Vietnam, freedom of expression and freedom of the press. There was a severe lack of due process in the conduct of his trial, including the unwarranted detention of several individuals who were peacefully seeking to observe the proceedings, including two former prisoners of conscience, [redacted].

The latest case which I have written to Vietnamese and Australian authorities in relation to concerns and the ever growing list of peaceful land rights activists from the peaceful Viet Tan group. Many Viet Tan activists have been imprisoned and either denied trial or subjected to sham trials, for campaigning for basic improvements to social welfare & human rights.

Although Article 50 of the Constitution of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam includes the protection of "political, civil, economic, cultural and social rights" for its people, and although torture is now technically banned, the Government's blatant disregard for international human rights law is deplorable. Political prisoners are kept in awful conditions, denied visitation rights and legal representation, and sometimes still tortured or abused in custody.

Vietnam is a beautiful nation of beautiful people, but I fail to see how Australia can continue to assist a government as reckless and dishonest in the area of human rights as the Vietnamese government.

Yours Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Luke Donnellan', is written over a horizontal line. The signature is stylized and somewhat messy, with a large loop at the end.

Luke Donnellan MP
State Member for Narre Warren North
Shadow Minister for Child Protection
Shadow Minister for Sport and Recreation