

Speech notes for: Cr Michelle MacDonald

Event: Vietnamese Boat People Monument of Gratitude unveiling

Date: Saturday, 21 June

Time: 10:45am to 12 noon

Location: Jensen Reserve, Footscray (Corner of Farnsworth Ave & Meyers Rd)

Event contact: Hung Chau, The Archive of Vietnamese Boat People Inc, Victorian Chapter

Kinh Chao Qui Vi

Good morning – I am Michelle MacDonald and I am the Mayor of the City of Maribyrnong and I am honoured to welcome you all here today.

We acknowledge that we are on traditional lands of the Wurundjeri tribe of the Kulin Nation. We offer our respect to the elders of these traditional lands, and through them to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

To begin, I would like to acknowledge the long list of special guests who have joined us to mark this commemorative day:

- Acting Premier and Attorney-General of Victoria Hon Rob Hulls MP
- Federal Member for Maribyrnong Hon Bill Shorten MP
- Leader of the Opposition Member for Hawthorn Ted Baillieu MP
- Member for Footscray Marsha Thomson
- Member for Narre Warren North, Parliament Secretary to the Premier Luke Donnellan MP
- Member for Sandringham Murray Thompson MP
- Member for Western Metropolitan Martin Pakula MLC
- Member for Western Metropolitan Colleen Hartland MLC
- Member for Western Metropolitan Khalil Eideh MLC
- MC Opposition Spokesperson for Multicultural Affairs, Member for Bulleen Nick Kotsiras
- Maribyrnong City Council representatives Cr Sel Sanli, Cr Janis Rossiter, Cr Michael Clarke, Cr Catherine Cumming and Cr Janet Rice
- Cr Nguyet Ann Truong, Wanneroo City Council

- Bruce Mildenhall, former Member for Footscray
- The Archive of Vietnamese Boat People Memorial Steering Committee
- Venerable Thich Phuoc Tan OAM
- Todd O'Dwyer, Regional Manager Delfin
- Lieutenant Linda Birchley, Department of Defence
- Religious leaders
- Community organisation leaders and presidents
- Footscray Police
- Officers representing the Federal, State and Local Government
- And the media.

This long list of special guests is testament to the momentous occasion we have gathered here to celebrate today.

On behalf of Council and residents of the City of Maribyrnong, I would like to welcome to you all to Footscray - the new home of the memorial to the Vietnamese Boat People.

Over 40 per cent of the City of Maribyrnong's residents were born overseas and with almost 10 per cent of these residents born in Vietnam; the Vietnamese community has played such an integral role in shaping the Footscray of today. While Footscray is undergoing a resurgence at the moment, and many people are attracted to the area, who was there in the dark days, who kept that shopping precinct alive – it was the Vietnamese. You were the community who showed confidence in Footscray, started businesses here, shopped here. Your contribution has not just been social and cultural, the Vietnamese community makes a huge contribution to the economy of the inner west. You provide jobs, businesses and valuable services in the western suburbs. To a lot of people across Melbourne and Australia, Footscray is synonymous with the Vietnamese community. I hope that there is always a place for the Vietnamese community in the western suburbs.

It is Refugee Week and I think it is important for us to not just celebrate refugees but to thank them for their contribution to our community. We can never take for granted that others share our views on this, we have to keep talking about the contribution of refugees.

This monument is beautiful and has come from the great sadness that the Vietnamese boatpeople have had to endure. But like all good commemorations it mixes that sadness with joy and hope for the future.

Figures from a survey of 100 families in this City - completed by the Archive of Vietnamese Boat People - state that for every two families who settled under refugee status, there was at least one relative who was left behind, was missing or perished.

These figures are the stark reality of many residents in this City who have made an amazing contribution to the rich fabric of our multi-cultural community.

We often forget how hard others have struggled to join our City and our country - that is why the Archive of Vietnamese Boat People efforts to build Australia's first commemoration memorial of gratitude to remind us, is so important and admirable.

Council is honoured to have this moving tribute in our City and we hope this memorial will be marked at an annual event and will become a significant site to local, national and international visitors who want to remember and pay tribute to the many people who lost their lives in pursuit of their freedom.

Thanks must go to the organisations that made this monument and today's celebrations possible, including:

- The AVBP Memorial Steering Committee;
- Delfin Lendlease for their assistance with site management and facilities for the event; and
- The children from St Albans East Primary School Choir.

On that note, I would like to welcome the Deputy Premier and Attorney General, the Honourable Rob Hulls to say a few words.

