



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

PROOF

Federation Chamber

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Dhondup Wangchen

SPEECH

Monday, 16 June 2014

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

SPEECH

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Questioner	Responder
Speaker Parke, Melissa, MP	Question No.

Ms PARKE (Fremantle) (16:04): In September 2009 I spoke in parliament advocating for the release of Tibetan political prisoner Dhondup Wangchen after meeting his distraught wife in Dharamsala, India, in July of that year. Last week, after serving six years in prison, Wangchen—the self-taught cameraman and video activist—was released from prison in Qinghai's provincial capital Xining.

In 2009 Wangchen was convicted on grounds of inciting separatism after coproducing and distributing the controversial and eye-opening documentary 'Leaving fear behind'. Wangchen and his assistant, Golog Jigme, had travelled across Tibet in 2007-08 giving everyday Tibetans a voice—an opportunity to tell the world about their plight and grievances at a time when China was experiencing heightened global attention as hosts of the Olympic Games in Beijing. Despite the fear of reprisal, the majority of the 108 Tibetans interviewed chose to refrain from hiding their identity—reflecting their strong desire and determination to express their views on the Dalai Lama, the Beijing Olympics and the Chinese government. The documentary has seen international success. It has been translated into a dozen languages and has been screened in more than 30 countries. After smuggling the footage out of Tibet, Wangchen was detained by the Chinese authorities and was transferred to a labour camp in 2010 before being sent to Qinghai prison.

As with other members of the Tibet Parliamentary Friendship Group, I am relieved by the news of his release. We will continue to advocate for genuine Tibetan autonomy and for the release of other political prisoners in Tibet, including the Panchen Lama—the second highest ranking lama after the Dalai Lama—who has been in protective custody since 1995, when he was six years old. *(Time expired)*