

View from The Hill: A ray of bipartisan good comes out of obscure senator's hate speech

Written by Michelle Grattan, Professorial Fellow, University of Canberra

Immigration has become one of the most divisive issues in Australian politics. It has created open fractures within government ranks and sparked dog whistling; it's being exploited to nefarious political ends by fringe and not-so-fringe players.

But an appallingly racist diatribe, by a senator who not one in a thousand Australians would have heard of, on Wednesday brought almost all the parliament together to reassert some core values of Australia's policy.

Delivering his [maiden speech](#) on Tuesday, Fraser Anning called for a ban on all further Muslim immigration and invoked the words "final solution" – the term referring to the Nazi extermination of millions of Jews – when calling for a popular vote on immigration.

Anning arrived in parliament by chance, replacing the equally controversial Malcolm Roberts from One Nation, who fell foul of the citizenship crisis. But Anning immediately [parted ways with](#) One Nation, and has recently joined Katter's Australian Party.

Among much else, the Queensland senator told parliament on Tuesday that "the one immigrant group here and in other Western nations that has consistently shown itself to be the least able to assimilate and integrate is Muslims".

"The first terrorist act on Australian soil occurred in 1915 – when two Muslim immigrants opened fire on a picnic train of innocent women and children in Broken Hill – and Muslim immigrants have been a problem ever since."

Such are the rituals of first speeches that many Coalition senators and even crossbencher Derryn Hinch (who has been beating up on himself publicly ever since) went over to pay Anning the traditional congratulations afterwards.

But after that reactions were quick, and by Wednesday morning condemnation was raining

View from The Hill: A ray of bipartisan good comes out of obscure senator's hate speech

Written by Michelle Grattan, Professorial Fellow, University of Canberra

down on Anning from almost everywhere.

Labor with the support of the government moved a motion in the Senate and the House; the leaders in both houses spoke.

The motion, which did not mention Anning by name, acknowledged “the historic action of the Holt Government, with bipartisan support from the Australian Labor Party, in initiating the dismantling of the White Australia Policy”.

It gave “unambiguous and unqualified commitment to the principle that, whatever criteria are applied by Australian Governments in exercising their sovereign right to determine the composition of the immigration intake, race, faith or ethnic origin shall never, explicitly or implicitly, be among them”.

The motion was the same (except for the addition of the word “faith”) as the one prime minister Bob Hawke moved in 1988 after opposition leader John Howard had suggested a slowing of Asian immigration. Then, the Liberals [voted against](#) the motion, though with three defections.

In our frequently depressing and often toxic political climate, Wednesday’s bipartisanship was a small but significant and encouraging moment of unity on what we stand for as a nation.

Mathias Cormann, an immigrant from Belgium, said: “This chamber in many ways is a true reflection of what a great migrant nation we are.”

“We have ... representatives of our Indigenous community. We have in this chamber representatives of Australians whose families have been here for generations, who are the descendants of migrants to Australia of more than 100 years ago.

“We have in this chamber first-generation migrants from Kenya, Malaysia, Belgium, Germany and Scotland. What a great country we are. Where first-generation Australians can join First

View from The Hill: A ray of bipartisan good comes out of obscure senator's hate speech

Written by Michelle Grattan, Professorial Fellow, University of Canberra

Australians and those Australians whose families have lived here for more than 100 years and all work together to make our great country an even better country.”

While the mainstream had its act together, on the fringe it was a wild ride.

Hanson denounced Anning's speech. “I have always advocated you do not have to be white to be Australian,” she said. And “to actually hear people say now that, as Senator Hinch said, it is like hearing Pauline Hanson on steroids – I take offence to that”.

Never mind that in her own [maiden speech](#) as a senator Hanson had declared that further Muslim immigration should be stopped and the burqa banned. “Now we are in danger of being swamped by Muslims who bear a culture and ideology that is incompatible with our own,” she [said](#) in September 2016.

Later on Wednesday Hanson introduced her private member's [bill](#) “to give voters a say on whether Australia's immigration levels are too high by casting a vote at the next general election”.

Then there was that force of nature, Bob Katter, who said he supported his new recruit “1000% ... I support everything he said”.

It is never easy to navigate one's way through Katter speak – on Wednesday it was at times close to impossible.

“Fraser is dead right – we do not want people coming in from the Middle East or North Africa unless they're the persecuted minorities. Why aren't you bringing in the Sikhs? Why aren't you bringing in the Jews?” he told a news conference in Cairns – he could not fly to Canberra and parliament because of a sinus procedure.

View from The Hill: A ray of bipartisan good comes out of obscure senator's hate speech

Written by Michelle Grattan, Professorial Fellow, University of Canberra

As for the “final solution” reference: “Fraser is a knockabout bloke, he’s owned pubs and he’s not stupid – he built his own aeroplane. But he hasn’t read all the history books.

“He didn’t go to university, he was out working building pipelines for the coal and the gas and the oil with a hard hat on. He’s a member of the hard left, not the lily pad left. He didn’t go to university to know the significance of all these words.

“Fraser would have no idea about what that meant. For those of us, like myself that are fascinated by history and have read the history books – it is one of the worst statements in all of human history.”

“He like myself, has had constant meetings and addressed Jewish groups around Australia. We are strongly behind the Jewish people.”

Hanson wasn’t the only one complaining of being insulted. Katter turned on a journalist who referred to his Lebanese grandfather.

“He’s not. He’s an Australian. I resent, strongly, you describing him as Lebanese. That is racist comment and you should take it back and should be ashamed ... No prouder Australian than my grandfather.”

Michelle Grattan does not work for, consult, own shares in or receive funding from any company or organisation that would benefit from this article, and has disclosed no relevant affiliations beyond their academic appointment.

Authors: Michelle Grattan, Professorial Fellow, University of Canberra

Read more <http://theconversation.com/view-from-the-hill-a-ray-of-bipartisan-good-comes-out-of-obscure-senators-hate-speech-101611>