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**FREEDOM OF SPEECH UNDER THREAT AT THE  
“PEOPLE’S HOUSE”**

Today I asked the Speaker of the House of Representatives to investigate reports of a disturbing incident involving the suppression of freedom of speech on the very doorstep of our national parliament.

Yesterday morning an Australian Protective Service (APS) officer told the driver of a private car, waiting at the Senate entrance of Parliament House, to remove a sign from inside the vehicle.

The sign read: “PLEASE GRANT CLEMENCY” and was inside the car, sitting on the back hatch, after a weekend vigil for Nguyen Tuong Van outside the Singaporean Embassy. The driver was told to remove the sign and was forced to place it in the boot, out of sight.

Regardless of the fact that the sign was not intended to be a protest at Parliament House - the driver didn't even know it was visible from the outside the car - such heavy-handed suppression of freedom of speech has no place in Australia.

It especially has no place at Parliament House - particularly given that later in the day the House of Representatives passed a bi-partisan motion calling on clemency for Mr Nguyen.

I also find it disturbing that this has occurred even before the new anti-terrorism laws, with their proposed sedition measures, have been introduced.

We cannot allow fear to override the basic rights that all Australians are entitled to.

We must carefully review these laws to ensure that we not only protect Australians from terrorism but also protect our civil liberties and freedoms.

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