



Cộng Đồng Người Việt Tự Do Úc Châu Vietnamese Community in Australia

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www.vietnamesecommunity.org.au

URGENT LETTER OF CONCERNS

12 May 2016

The Hon Bill Shorten MP
Opposition Leader

Dear Mr. Shorten,

We, the undersigned,

- Executive Committee of the Vietnamese Community in Australia (VCA)
- Executive Committees of the Vietnamese Community in Australia State and Territory Chapters,

On behalf of all Vietnamese-Australian citizens, would like to bring to your attention an important matter that has been and will be seriously impacting upon the health and well-being of the Vietnamese-Australians in Australia and of all Australians travelling to or visiting Vietnam in the immediate and near future.

1. Since 6th April 2016, thousands and later millions of dead fish, some rare deep sea species, clams, crustaceans and countless of dead seabirds were washed up along the 125 miles stretch of Vietnam's central coastline in north-central Vietnam provinces, including some popular beaches in Ha Tinh, Quang Binh, Quang Tri, Thua Thien Hue and Quang Nam, all with clear signs of being killed by toxic industrial pollution.
2. Public and expert scrutiny has focused on the massive Taiwanese-owned Formosa steel plant which has been pumping tons of untreated wastewater directly into the sea. One diver, Mr. Le Van Ngay, who was employed by Nibelc, a Formosa's contracted company, had died and four of his co-divers were treated in hospital on 24th April 2016 after diving in the contaminated waters of Vung Ang (Ha Tinh) where the steel plant is located.
3. The Vietnamese government's reaction to this calamity has been extremely slow, inaccurate and indifferent to massive public concerns on the nation's staple food supply and the welfare and the livelihood of tens of thousands fishermen and their families affected by this crisis. Instead of explaining and informing its people of the situation, the Vietnamese government is suppressing information and reacted to the public demands for answers with brutal force, and did nothing to stop suspected industrial plans such as Formosa to cease their wastewater operation pending an urgent and thorough investigation.



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4. Witness accounts described how many people collected large numbers of dead fish and placed them in refrigerated trucks, presumably to sell or making products such as fish sauce out of these contaminated fish.

As Australians who have strong connections and vested interest in Vietnam and the Vietnamese people, we are seeking urgent and concrete actions from you as the Leader of the Opposition to safeguard the safety and wellbeing of Australians who will be visiting or having business investments in Vietnam by requesting the Prime Minister and the Government of Australia to:

- a. Issue a Travel Warning to Australian travellers on the dangers of consuming sea foods and or swimming in the contaminated areas in Viet Nam.
- b. Request the Government of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam (SRV) to respect the people's voice in rallies and exercise restraint on the public who have a right to concern about their safety and livelihood under the UN International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1966), to which Viet Nam had signed up on 24/9/1982.
- c. Urge the Vietnamese government to improve and strictly enforce environmental laws to protect public health including the health and safety of foreign visitors.
- d. Link Australian existing and future economic aids to Vietnam with measurable environmental protections and improved environmental human rights of Vietnamese people.
- e. Seek greater transparency in the quality and assessment on safety of seafood products imported from Vietnam into Australia.
- f. Invoke Section 20 of The Trans-Pacific Partnership to put pressure on the SRV to improve its records of compliance with international environmental standards and laws on the protection of the marine environment.

We are looking forward to receiving a concrete response on what you and the Opposition could and would do on these important concerns.

Thank you sincerely for your time and consideration.

- **Mr. Tri Vo** - Federal President, Vietnamese Community in Australia (VCA)
- **Dr. Thang Ha** - President of VCA–NSW Chapter
- **Ms. Vivienne Nguyen** – President of VCA–VIC Chapter
- **Dr. Cuong Bui** – President of the VCA–QLD Chapter
- **Mr. Tin Le** – President of the VCA–SA Chapter
- **Dr. Anh Nguyen** – President of the VCA–WA Chapter
- **Mr. Cong Le** – President of the VCA–ACT Chapter
- **Mr. Thien Le** – President of the VCA–NT Chapter
- **Ms. Thuy Tran** – President of VCA–Wollongong Chapter.