

DESPATCH BOX

SPEECH TIME FOR STUDENTS AT PARLIAMENT HOUSE

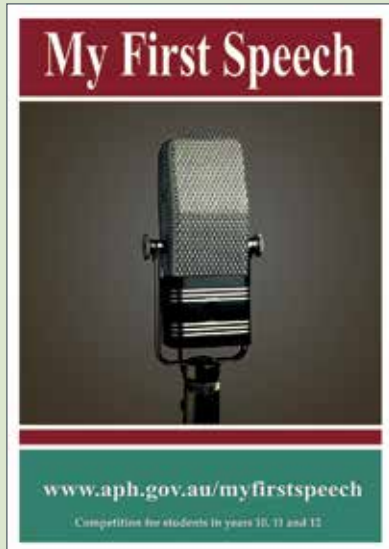
It's on again: the popular My First Speech competition for Australian high school students from years 10 to 12.

Students are asked to submit a three minute video of the first speech they would make if they were elected to the House of Representatives.

The top three students will be brought to Canberra to deliver their speeches at Parliament House, and there are also cash prizes on offer for the winning students and their schools.

My First Speech entries close on 12 September 2014. For details on how to enter visit:

www.aph.gov.au/myfirstspeech or email: comps.reps@aph.gov.au or phone 1800 139 299.



TONGA FORUM BOOSTS PACIFIC PARTNERSHIP



▶ LEADING THE WAY: Pacific women MPs are breaking down barriers

Women parliamentarians from across the Pacific region and Australia have joined forces in an effort to boost women's participation in politics and women's representation in parliament.

Attending the Pacific Women's Parliamentary Partnerships Forum in Tonga, women MPs from 13 jurisdictions have called for gender training in parliaments; more meaningful engagement between parliament and women's groups in the community; positive media reporting about women in parliament; and more mentoring of emerging women leaders in the Pacific.

Federal MPs Louise Markus (Macquarie, NSW) and Anna Burke (Chisholm, Vic) represented Australia at the forum, along with Australia's Ambassador for Women and Girls, Natasha Stott Despoja, and Tasmanian MPs Ruth Forrest and Cassy O'Connor.

Forum participants suggested that women should take an active role in community groups and in local government as a pathway that could lead to broader involvement of women in national decision making processes.

They also argued that effort should be devoted to encouraging male 'champions' for gender equity in Pacific countries so that men take an active role in breaking down barriers to women's participation in public life.

The forum was opened by Her Royal Highness Princess Mele Siu'ilikutapu Kalaniuvalu-Fotofili, the first woman elected to the Tongan parliament.

"The heightened responsibilities of legislatures today, as demanded by the greater complexities of society, urgently necessitate the shared wisdom of both genders," she said.

The forum was supported by the Australian aid program, under the federal government's Pacific Women Shaping Pacific Development initiative. For more information on the Pacific Women's Parliamentary Partnerships project visit:

www.pacificparliaments.net/pwpp ■

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