

Celebrate our differences: first Muslim MP

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Ed Husic ... Australia's first Muslim MP makes his maiden address to parliament. Photo: Ben Rushton

Australia's first Muslim federal MP has spoken of the need to not just tolerate, but to remain open to those of different backgrounds or religions.

It was what helped Ed Husic become the new member for the western Sydney seat of Chifley.

The ex-union boss and son of migrants gave his maiden speech in front of Labor colleagues today, when he talked about the importance of embracing multiculturalism.



Prime Minister Julia Gillard hugs Ed Husic after his maiden speech. Photo: Ben Rushton

"My fundamental world view rests at its core on the notion of balance," he said.

"I do not just tolerate alternate views, I remain open to them, I learn and grow from them. We should celebrate our different views and different ideas. Multiculturalism is why our country is great."

Mr Husic was attacked during the election campaign by the former Liberal candidate David Barker, who was eventually dumped for saying there should not be a Muslim in parliament.

Watched in the gallery by predecessor Roger Price, who held Chifley for 26 years, Mr Husic said parliament needed to capitalise on the talent of all people.

"When we harness all the good will and talent across all the corners of this land, from our first owners to the recently arrived, we build one of the greatest countries on the planet.

"I continue to draw inspiration from a nation whose success comes off the back of many - regardless of their background."

Last month, Mr Husic made history as he was sworn into parliament, the first MP to do so with his hand on a copy of the Koran.

"My arrival here finally brings together the children of Abraham ... Christians, Jews and Muslims," he said.

"Working together with other people of values for the national good, united under this one roof."

A proud product of the public education system, the Blacktown-based Mr Husic said education and early childhood care would be some of his key focuses.

Climate change and strong economic management were also on his agenda.

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