

● THIS WEEK ●

A gathering for peace

By THANG LUONG

THE baby strapped in the stroller must have wondered why the balloons were in the sky over Cabravale Park around 2.30pm last Saturday.

Did the baby also wonder why more than 500 people, including politicians and local community groups – some of whom wore T-shirts with the message “Strength in diversity” – had gathered for a peace rally in the wake of the murder of MP John Newman?

Perhaps not.

But everyone who was older than the baby knew why they were there that sunny afternoon – to seek peace, harmony and security for Cabramatta residents.

Fairfield City Mayor, Councillor Nick Lalich launched the rally.

“We’ve been copping a lot of flak over the last couple of weeks,” he said. “Every time there’s a stabbing or somebody gets bashed, it’s front page news for a week.”

The small stage on



MORE than 500 people gathered in Cabravale Park to pay tribute to murdered MP John Newman.

which Councillor Lalich was standing had a backdrop which read “CARES” (Cabramatta all races embraces solidarity).

It was from here the crowd heard messages of peace but also calls for solidarity and defiance, given the “backlash” and “Asian bashing” in some recent media reports.

Fairfield Cr

Ngo pleaded for unity “in this time of crisis”.

“We are determined to overcome the difficulties facing us to build a better, brighter and stronger community in Cabramatta. More than ever we should put our efforts together. Please join with me, hold hands together as a sign of unity.”

Other politicians like

Janice Crosio and Carl Scully urged the community to be united to solve the community’s problems.

Banners proclaimed “The Vietnamese in Cabramatta strongly oppose all forms of violence”, and “Bigotry shames us all”. But there was a feeling of hope in songs like John Lennon’s Imagine, played

by one band, and a local singer’s Common Threads.

President of the Vietnamese community in Australia, Cuong Vo, reminded the crowd of John Newman’s death and said Mr Newman’s murderers must be strongly punished by Australian law.