



Speech by

Hon. D. WELLS

MEMBER FOR MURRUMBA

Hansard 10 December 1999

PARLIAMENTARY AMNESTY GROUP

Human Rights Violations, East Timor

Hon. D. M. WELLS (Murrumba—ALP) (Minister for Education) (4.49 p.m.), by leave, without notice: On behalf of the Queensland Parliamentary Amnesty Group, I move—

"That the Parliament of Queensland supports the United Nations in its efforts to restore observance of human rights in East Timor."

The crimes against humanity in East Timor are matters of enduring international concern because of their severity and their shocking nature, which has shocked the conscience of humanity. In East Timor, there have been acts of violence, intimidation, extra-judicial executions, disappearances and torture.

Since August this year, throughout East Timor houses and buildings were burnt to the ground and hundreds of thousands of people fled to the hills in desperate and, sadly, often futile attempts to escape. Over 200,000 people were forced to flee. Many are now refugees in West Timor and other parts of East Timor. There have been incredible reports of these refugees who were forced from their homeland continuing to suffer from violence, intimidation and threats, including abductions and extra-judicial executions.

The people of East Timor deserve to be treated fairly and humanely. On 27 September, the United Nations Commission on Human Rights set up a commission of inquiry to investigate breaches of human rights in East Timor. It calls for Governments around the world to ensure that justice is done on behalf of the people of East Timor. To achieve that, the United Nations commission of inquiry must be independent, impartial and free from obstruction, including that from Governments.

The commission should be permitted to travel to other countries as well as Indonesia to collect evidence and testimonies of those concerned. The commission should identify alleged perpetrators and secure evidence and sites of massacres for forensic investigators in order to keep up the pressure and to ensure that those responsible for perpetrating violations of human rights and breaching international humanitarian law are brought before an international tribunal or national courts. We urge honourable members to support this motion.
