



Speech by

JACK PAFF

MEMBER FOR IPSWICH WEST

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EAST TIMOR

Mr PAFF (Ipswich West—ONP) (10.23 a.m.): It is with heartfelt sorrow that we hear of the devastation that is taking place in East Timor as we speak. The lives of many people have been lost and still more will die. The Indonesian military forces are not protecting the people. They are most certainly aiding in the slaughter of innocent men, women and children whose only crime is to want their freedom. How many more people have to suffer before greedy men and arrogant politicians are touched by the pleas of the people? I do not mean after the event; I mean before it.

The major parties in this country have blood on their hands for their appeasement of Indonesia. Paul Keating has blood on his hands for the secret defence deal he made with President Suharto of Indonesia. Now we have a situation in which we have no choice but to send in Australian soldiers to risk their own lives to protect the East Timorese people. I am sure it would be of greater comfort to all if we could send in the politicians with Keating leading the charge. Are we a nation with leaders or a nation of cowards?

The situation in East Timor requires serious and immediate attention. The Prime Minister has done the right thing by preparing Australian troops to go to East Timor. The process, however, is far too slow. Each day that passes costs more lives. Let us pray that when they get there it will not be too late. Before I close, I feel it is necessary to say that, if Australia ever needed a wake-up call to indicate to us that our defence forces are inadequate and insufficient in number, this is that call. Do not let the next one be too late.
