



Speech by

Hon. JUDY SPENCE

MEMBER FOR MOUNT GRAVATT

Hansard 10 December 1999

PARLIAMENTARY AMNESTY GROUP

Human Rights Violations, East Timor

Hon. J. C. SPENCE (Mount Gravatt— ALP) (Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy and Minister for Women's Policy and Minister for Fair Trading) (4.51 p.m.): I second the motion. I think that it has become an important tradition of this Parliament that, on the last day of each parliamentary year, we move a motion on behalf of Amnesty International and spend some time thinking about human rights issues on a broader international scale.

I think that many of us find it difficult to find time to attend the Parliamentary Amnesty Group. This is one way in which we can keep in touch with Amnesty International and support the work of that very good organisation. Collectively, we all care about human rights. This year particularly, Australians have been engaged in human rights issues, particularly as we saw Steve Pratt and our own Queenslander Peter Wallace imprisoned for seven months because of their humanitarian activities on behalf of Care Australia in Kosovo. More recently, of course, via the media we have seen the human tragedies that have occurred in East Timor.

Australians' hearts have gone out to the people of East Timor. We have seen people having to abandon their homes, we have seen murders, and we have seen distress, particularly among children. Our peacekeeping force, particularly those soldiers from Queensland, are doing a wonderful job in East Timor. I know that they are supported by Amnesty International. It is wonderful that we in the Parliament today can recognise the work of Amnesty International and uphold this motion in support of their activities.
