



Speech by

**JULIE ATTWOOD**

**MEMBER FOR MOUNT OMMANEY**

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Hansard 14 September 1999

#### **EAST TIMOR**

**Mrs ATTWOOD** (Mount Ommaney—ALP) (10.13 a.m.): The body count continues to rise amid reports of massacres and violence in Dili. How can we, as a close neighbour and humanitarians, look on and allow this to go on? If our neighbour was in trouble and their lives threatened, we would certainly take action to help them out in any way we possibly could. Aid workers from Caritas Catholic Social Response were afraid for their lives. But the response from the Defence Minister was an uncaring, blase "they knew what to expect—they went over there with their eyes open". If he cared about the loss of life as much as the aid workers, his response would have been different.

Last Sunday, at the Canossa Hospital church service, Archbishop Rush dedicated the mass to the troubled country. He said that anger and resentment is the cause of wars. If we could all just think and reflect for a moment before breaking out in a rage of anger, this bloody violence would not occur.

There are currently 47 Canossan Sisters who can now not be traced in East Timor. What has become of them? What steps will the Federal Government take to investigate their whereabouts? These Christian nuns have devoted their lives to helping others in distress. They have been caught up in the violence and treated no differently than the people they have been trying to help.

While we sit comfortably watching these events from a safe distance, others are putting their lives at risk at the core of the violence in an attempt to save their neighbours. We are not powerless and we should exercise our democratic rights to insist that the Federal Government at least find safe passage for those aid workers who believe in humanity.

As the Australian Government is guaranteeing one billion dollars in loan funds from the IMF to restructure the Indonesian economy, surely we can exert some form of economic pressure to ensure the military maintain the peace in Timor.

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