



Speech by

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MEMBER FOR MUNDINGBURRA

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EAST TIMOR

Ms NELSON-CARR (Mundingburra—ALP) (10.28 a.m.): In what is left of East Timor people are under siege. With a population of 900,000, East Timor is largely rural and about 47% of children over 10 have never been to school. Today, the situation in East Timor has deteriorated to a catastrophic state since the referendum ballot, at which 78.5% of the East Timorese population voted for independence. The many volunteer workers who have been providing the desperately needed international solidarity and relief assistance during the crisis have been evacuated. Most media have also been evacuated, making it difficult to inform the world of the continued atrocities. As our Federal Government continued to sit back with continued ineffectiveness, the slaughter was maintained. Catholic priests and nuns were also gunned down.

Although peacekeeping forces have now been organised, it is heartening to know that large numbers of Australian people are being incredibly vocal about this crisis occurring to our near neighbours. Calls from the Queensland Council of Unions for a campaign of peace are to be congratulated. The proposed industrial action against Indonesian interests and consumer boycotts of Indonesian products and services is small indeed when compared to the massive loss of human life. If we link with Amnesty, Community Aid Abroad and other church and activist groups, we are indeed doing something positive to avert the continued crisis.

It was also heartening to see that last week Queensland communities came out strongly in support of a campaign for peace. In Townsville on Friday night, more than 150 people turned out for a candlelight vigil pledging their support. That was organised by the JCU NTU at very short notice that day. It has been a long time indeed since public outrage has been so vocal. In Brisbane, the numbers swelled to the thousands in support of peace for the East Timorese—once again organised at short notice. The organising of demonstrations to inform the community of the East Timorese crisis is the very least that we can do.

In addition, the UN Security Council, the World Bank and International Monetary Fund should be pressured to act quickly in bringing international pressure on the Indonesian Government to protect the East Timorese from human rights violations. Our prayers are with the soldiers in the peacekeeping force and their families, as they attempt to bring peace to East Timor where the Indonesian military remain. Our thoughts are with them as they leave this weekend on a dangerous mission.
