



Speech by

Hon. PETER BEATTIE

MEMBER FOR BRISBANE CENTRAL

Hansard 14 September 1999

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

East Timor

Hon. P. D. BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier) (9.34 a.m.), by leave: I know that I speak for all Queenslanders when I express concern and sorrow over recent events in East Timor. Our hearts and prayers go out to the innocent victims and their families. All Queenslanders, and indeed all Australians, want to see a peaceful transition to independence for East Timor. More than 78% of East Timorese voted for independence—an overwhelming majority by any measure but particularly so when there was a voter turnout of more than 95%. As I said, the people of Queensland have been dismayed at events that followed the massive vote for independence. We have also been heartened by the continuing faith of the majority of East Timorese in democracy.

State Cabinet last week passed a resolution calling on the Federal Government to do what it could via the Indonesian Government and the United Nations to secure peace and safety for the East Timorese, and I conveyed that resolution to the Prime Minister. We therefore welcome the decision by Indonesian President Habibie to allow an international peacekeeping task force into East Timor. This is an appropriate response to the violence that has erupted in East Timor. I know that all honourable members and the people of Queensland join me in praying that the task force will end the violence and that the people of East Timor will soon be able to live in peaceful independence.

Last Thursday the Prime Minister briefed the Premiers on the position in East Timor when we were at Kirribilli House to welcome the President of China. All Premiers and the Prime Minister were deeply concerned about events in East Timor. I know that they share in the spirit of what I have expressed to the House today, that is, the desire for an independent East Timor where people can live in peace, without the threat of violence.
