



Speech by
**Mr DENVER
BEANLAND**

MEMBER FOR INDOOROOPIILLY

Hansard 16 November 2000

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL
Human Rights Abuses Against Women and Children

Mr BEANLAND (Indooroopilly—LP) (7.26 p.m.): On behalf of the Opposition, I rise to support the motion before the House which I believe is self-explanatory. Violence against women cuts across social and economic circumstances and is deeply embedded in cultures around the world, so much so that millions of women consider it a way of life.

Gender-based violence in various forms including rape, domestic violence, honour killings and trafficking in women exacts a heavy toll on mental and physical health. Increasingly, gender-based violence is recognised as a major public health concern and a serious violation of basic human rights.

Around the world, women have been beaten, coerced into sex or abused in some other way, most often by someone they know. Millions of women require medical attention or otherwise suffer the impact of gender-based violence. Fear of violence inhibits discussion and constrains the health choices and life opportunities of many millions more. Psychological abuse often accompanies physical abuse. In addition, one third to one half of all cases involve sexual abuse. A high proportion of women who are beaten are repeatedly subjected to violence. Violence against women is a pervasive yet under-recognised human rights violation.

Accordingly, the 1993 World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna and the 1995 Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing gave priority to this problem. Violence against women and girls takes many forms. Millions of girls who would otherwise be expected to be alive are missing from various populations, mostly in Asia, as a result of sex-selective abortions, infanticide or neglect.

Studies suggest domestic violence is widespread in most societies and is a frequent cause of suicides among women. Many rapes go unreported because of the stigma and trauma associated with them and lack of sympathetic treatment from legal systems. Estimates of the proportion of rapes reported to authorities vary. However, two million girls between the ages of five and 15 are introduced into the commercial sex market each year. At least two million girls are at risk each year from female genital mutilation or cutting and downgrading and other dangerous practices. So-called honour killings take the lives of thousands of young women every year, mainly in western Asia, north Africa and parts of southern Asia. At least 1,000 women were murdered in Pakistan in 1999.

From those figures, one can see that there is a major problem in this area and the Opposition supports the motion.
