



Speech by

Mr L. SPRINGBORG

MEMBER FOR SOUTHERN DOWNS

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AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

Take a Step to Stamp Out Torture Campaign

Mr SPRINGBORG (Southern Downs—NPA) (3.35 p.m.): I rise to second the motion moved by the Minister for Environment. Considering the aspirations of Amnesty International's motion, it behoves all members of parliament to support it. The motion says that the campaign is basically all about taking steps to stamp out torture and acknowledging Amnesty's 12-point program for the prevention of torture. Many of us find it very hard to believe and understand that, as opposed to our very civilised country, which has a whole range of protective steps, natural justice and processes put in place by our governments and courts to protect our basic rights and liberties, these sorts of things happen in at least 150 countries around the world. Only recently I read a book on the Inquisition. Many people would not believe that the Inquisition was finally put to rest in the 20th century. It started shortly after the 10th century and continued for almost 1,000 years.

The things that happened in those days were repugnant. Torture was a part of the Inquisition. Just as we should not be prepared to accept an inquisitorial-type regime in this day and age, we should not be prepared to accept in any way, shape or form in our own country or other countries around the world a regime which is based on torture to intimidate people based on their gender or their political views. That is completely and absolutely unacceptable and something which we should be working with other kindred groups around the world to attempt to stamp out. It is also very hard for us to understand and believe that in our world—we have public interest monitors who ensure that our basic rights and liberties are protected, various bodies that investigate criminal breaches and misconduct in our society, official visitors who go into jails, taped statements and a whole range of other protective mechanisms—there are at least 150 countries where these sorts of things are not a matter of course and are not enshrined. Quite frankly, this is not good enough.

I do not think many of us could imagine the absolute horror and uncertainty of going to bed at night and sleeping very uncomfortably realising that tomorrow we could be the victim of physical or psychological torture, something that would leave us either mentally or physically scarred for the rest of our lives. Because we have such strong and affirmed values and beliefs in this country, we should do whatever we possibly can to ensure that other countries around the world also adhere to those values, because they are basic human values. They are values of dignity. They are values of respect and values of mutual respect. It is very important to ensure that we eliminate such things as torture, detention without access to people from the outside, detention without access to legal counsel or one's family and statements taken under torture and duress, because they can be abused and used against the person who is the subject of that torture. We have to work really hard in Australia and beyond to ensure that those aspirations are upheld and that these indignities and abuses of human rights are stamped out. I ask all members to unanimously support Amnesty's motion and Amnesty's 2001 resolution in terms of stamping out torture around the world.
