



Speech by

Mr L. SPRINGBORG

MEMBER FOR SOUTHERN DOWNS

Hansard 5 December 2002

PARLIAMENTARY AMNESTY GROUP
Human Rights of Women

Mr SPRINGBORG (Southern Downs—NPA) (12.34 p.m.): I rise to second the motion that was moved by the minister. I give the very, very strong support of the opposition to the sentiments that were expressed in the motion moved by the Minister for Environment. Such motions are becoming a regular part of this parliament prior to moving into the valedictory stage. I think it is a very, very important process because it enables the parliament to be able to reflect upon the human rights abuses that happen around the world each year as we head into our traditional celebration time of the year. In many cases, it also acts as a social reminder to us to not take for granted the things that we have achieved in this place and also the things that we have achieved as part of a broader Western democracy which, as part of its ethical conduct, includes the upholding and support of basic human rights.

It is fair to say that whilst there may be some differences to the way in which rights and natural justice are delivered in Western countries, we all uphold basic standards. It is probably also important to note and reflect upon the fact that we have many women in this parliament. By and large, women take an equal place within our community. We frown very seriously upon any abuse of human rights or anything that seeks to reduce the standing of women in our community. Therefore, as a developed Western democracy, it is important for us to ensure that these views—which are the right views—are sought to be respected and adopted by other countries around the world.

From time to time I say to my children that there is no right and wrong in politics; there are just differences. But I believe that there are things that are right and wrong in terms of human rights and respect for humanity. The abuses that we see happen systemically in places around the world—in developing countries and the countries that do not have the same respect for women because of their religion, or whatever—need to be encouraged to respect women's human rights.

Certainly, as the Minister for Environment indicated in the case of Amina Lawal in Nigeria, we have to seek to ensure that that sort of imposition of Islamic sharia law is not countenanced and supported. Whilst we must respect other cultures and the faiths that they practise, there are certain things that some cultures and religions practise that are repugnant to common decent humanity. Stoning to death, systematic torture and also rape, which happens in some cases, is repugnant to us and needs to be condemned absolutely.

For those people who say that some people have a right to practise what they have always practised, I say that in times past cannibalism used to be accepted throughout the world. Governments throughout the world have moved to ban that practice and walk away from it. I say that stoning to death for things such as having children out of wedlock—or for anything, for that matter—needs to be deplored by this parliament. We need to encourage very, very firmly those countries that continue to adopt this repugnant abuse of human rights to step away from it. It is not acceptable to us and it should not be acceptable to any decent person in this world who has any sort of basic semblance of respect for human rights and humanity. Therefore, this motion of the parliament deserves to be supported.