



Speech by

John-Paul Langbroek

MEMBER FOR SURFERS PARADISE

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PARLIAMENTARY AMNESTY GROUP: INTERNATIONAL DAY OF ACTION, PAKISTAN

Mr LANGBROEK (Surfers Paradise—Lib) (6.33 pm): I second the motion moved by the member for Murrumba, a man who has very passionately held views. Whilst I may not always share them I appreciate the way that he delivers them in this House. The point is that he has a right to make his views known. I respect his right to deliver his views. I note that he is obviously not very well tonight because normally he would have spoken for far longer than he did tonight. I enjoy listening to the honourable member for Murrumba.

We should not forget that politics is a contest of ideas and that no side has a monopoly or mortgage on any issue, whether it is human rights or social issues. The issue that is the subject of this motion tonight was brought home to me a couple of weeks ago at an admission ceremony for a solicitor who was a former staff member of mine. The Chief Justice, Paul de Jersey, referred to the issues in Pakistan at this very nice ceremony last Monday morning.

It was very interesting to hear the Chief Justice refer to those issues. He was pointing out that there is a stark contrast between what is happening in Pakistan at the moment and what happens here. An article I read in *The Economist* magazine summarised the things that are happening in Pakistan. It is very tragic and it is something that we do not experience here because of our separation of the judiciary, the executive and the parliament. The article in this week's issue of *The Economist* stated—

In Pakistan the Supreme Court and the provisional high courts have been suspended, dozens of dissident judges have been purged, political gatherings are banned, at least 2,000 lawyers, political activists, human rights workers and journalists have been detained.

The Chief Justice in this very nice ceremony pointed out just how great a country we live in and what a great state we live in. I note that last year the honourable member for Ashgrove mentioned Burma. I think that is another country that could have been included in this motion given what she said last year. We are very aware of what is happening under that military junta in Burma.

People like Aung San Suu Kyi and her supporters will know from the motion that we are moving tonight that they have support for their struggle. Some 25 years ago when I was working in England there was a great movement to free Nelson Mandela. I would never have believed at the time that he would now be considered one of the world's greatest statesmen. It shows the struggle of the people who tried to free Nelson Mandela and the great success they had. It did work in that case. It shows us that there are different ways to achieve the things we need to. Most importantly, people should have the right to express their views.

In Australia and Queensland we have a commitment to freedom of speech and freedom of association and freedom of assembly. This takes me back to my induction ceremony. I am sure the Speaker and the Clerk of the Parliament are happy to realise that some of us do remember some of our induction. I remember someone coming to us and telling us that many people who come from other countries find it perplexing that our system works without enforcement by the police or the armed forces. It is something that we can be very proud of. Even though we come in here and the debate is very robust

most importantly it is about ideas. We are very proud of our civil society. Long may it continue. It does work.

I am happy to second the motion. I pay tribute to someone in my family. My father was a conscientious objector in the Netherlands in the 1950s. He refused to serve in the armed forces. He is now 75 years old and lives in Melbourne. But in a country like the Netherlands where he refused to do his national service he was jailed for six months. He stood up for what he believed in. People have the right to do so. I commend the motion to the House.