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REFERENCES COMMITTEE

Reference: Economic, social and political conditions in East Timor

MONDAY, 19 JULY 1999

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SENATE
FOREIGN AFFAIRS, DEFENCE AND TRADE REFERENCES COMMITTEE
Monday, 19 July 1999

Members: Senator Hogg (*Chair*), Senators Bourne, Brownhill, Lightfoot, Quirke and West

Participating members: Senators Abetz, Bolkus, Boswell, Brown, Cook, Eggleston, Faulkner, Forshaw, Gibbs, Harradine and McGauran

Senators in attendance: Senators Hogg, Lightfoot, West and Quirke

Terms of reference for the inquiry:

- (a) economic, social and political conditions in East Timor including respect for human rights in the territory;
- (b) Indonesia's military presence in East Timor and reports of ongoing conflict in the territory;
- (c) the prospects for a just and lasting settlement of the East Timor conflict;
- (d) Australia's humanitarian and development assistance in East Timor;
- (e) the Timor Gap (Zone of Cooperation Treaty); and
- (f) past and present Australian Government policy toward East Timor including the issue of East Timorese self-determination.

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Subcommittee met at 9.15 a.m.

CHAIR—I declare open this public meeting of the Senate Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade References Committee which is inquiring into East Timor. This is the first day of public hearings to be conducted by the committee on this matter. The Senate referred the inquiry to the committee on 30 November 1998 for a report by 21 October this year. Advertisements regarding the inquiry and calling of written submissions were placed in the main newspapers in each state and territory capital city on 12 December 1998. To date the committee has received 75 submissions. Public hearings will be held tomorrow in Perth and additional hearings will be held during the coming months in Melbourne, Sydney, Canberra, Brisbane and Darwin.

Throughout this inquiry the committee will concentrate mainly on the current situation and the prospects for a just and lasting peace settlement in East Timor. It will look at the evolution and future direction of Australian government policy towards East Timor, Australia's humanitarian development assistance to East Timor and the Timor Gap Zone of Cooperation Treaty.

BROWN, Professor Colin Patric Metcalfe (Private capacity)

CHAIR—I welcome Professor Colin Brown, Professor of Asian Studies and Languages, Flinders University, to this hearing. The committee prefers all evidence to be given in public but should you at any stage wish to give any part of your evidence in private you may ask to do so and the committee will consider your request. The committee has before it a written submission from you. Are there any alterations or additions you would like to make to the submission at this stage?

Prof. Brown—Nothing of substance, although I would note that in the first major paragraph I refer to three main points. I can't count! In fact, there are four.

CHAIR—That is fine. For the purpose of obtaining an accurate record, would you remain behind at the end of the proceedings so that the Hansard officer can check spelling and sources of information provided this morning. I now invite you to make an opening statement and then we will proceed to questions.

Prof. Brown—Thank you. I would like to inform the committee that I am not appearing before it as a specialist on East Timor. I do not have specialist knowledge of the territory; I have never been to East Timor. I do, however, try to keep myself informed as to developments there and I do have some specialist knowledge of Indonesia. I first went there in 1972. I have spent approximately seven years living and working there. I was there most recently in June this year. I have a reasonably wide range of contacts in Indonesia, in both the public and the private sectors, and it is on the basis of that knowledge that I am appearing before you today.

I will not repeat what I have said in the notes that I have submitted to you but there are a few things I would like to say to put them in context. I take it as a given that for humanitarian and strategic reasons Australian policy on East Timor must be directed towards bringing the unrest and violence in the territory to an end. In the past, Australian governments have believed that this could be achieved through recognition of Indonesian sovereignty and the assumption that the East Timorese would, at worst, resign themselves to that condition and more positively accept it.

In recent years, especially since the Santa Cruz or Dili massacre of 1991, this hope has been increasingly fragile and increasingly unlikely to succeed. An alternative process became possible with President Habibie's announcement of 27 January this year, opening the possibility of the Timorese choosing either to stay in Indonesia under an expanded autonomy agreement or leaving it. Our position now should be to support as clearly and unequivocally as we can that process and implementation of its outcome, whatever that outcome might be—either autonomy within Indonesia or independence.

In doing so, Australia must take into account Indonesia's position on developments in East Timor. To many in Australia, this is an unpalatable and perhaps even unacceptable position. To me, however, it is simply a reflection of reality. Indonesia has de facto authority in the territory and we still recognise its de jure authority, even though many other countries do not. To try to force through a solution to the Timor problem without the acquiescence of Indonesia would be futile. One key to a successful Australian policy on Timor is

understanding of the Indonesian position, or perhaps positions, since there are several voices speaking on this matter in Jakarta. This is not the only key to good policy on the issue but I believe it to be a necessary one.

Most of my paper is devoted to a consideration of some of the factors which I think are influencing the current Indonesian position on Timor and which we need to consider when shaping our own policy. One important consideration in my view is that there are senior political and bureaucratic leaders in Jakarta who, for some time, have been arguing for change in Jakarta's policy on the territory and, in some cases, arguing for letting Timor go altogether. In my opinion this is usually not argued as a matter of principle—that the East Timorese as a matter of right have the right to independence. I think it has much more commonly come about by pragmatic considerations, most commonly an argument that says the whole question of East Timor is simply too costly for Indonesia to continue to pursue in established ways and, thus, that it needs to change that policy. Our policy pronouncements and actions need to be directed to supporting these people and certainly not to alienating them.

I also suggest that a primary consideration of many in Jakarta—and particularly a primary consideration of many military leaders—is the unity of the rest of Indonesia. If it were to appear that our support for the ballot in Timor presaged support for separatist movements in other parts of the country, then we would have little chance of success with the Timor policy, so we need to address the question of the unity of the rest of Indonesia, the other 26 provinces. We need also to recognise that for most political and other leaders in Jakarta, Timor is less important than, for instance, the outcome of the June elections, the current economic crisis and the social and, to some extent, ethnic disruptions that have been seen in other parts of the country. We have to live with and to work with Indonesia now and after the East Timor problem has been resolved. It would be counterproductive to our national interests to completely alienate Indonesia over Timor.

This is not an argument to do nothing. It is an argument to act sensibly and sensitively. The interests of the Timorese must not be sacrificed to our relations with Indonesia, but neither must the reverse be the case. We face a particularly difficult dilemma here, more difficult than that faced, I suspect, by any other power, given that Indonesia is of greater significance to us than it is to almost any other comparable country. In addition, we need to acknowledge that our commitment to Timor must be medium and possibly long term. We must not lose interest once the ballot has been held. If it goes in favour of independence, we should stand ready to assist, if requested, in maintaining security, supporting economic development and establishing and maintaining good governance.

If the ballot goes in favour of autonomy, provided this outcome seems credible, we should also be ready to continue the provision of economic and other aid, as indeed we have been doing in the past. I would emphasise that the challenge now is to ensure that Australian policy works to the benefit of the Timorese while retaining and building on the good relationships we have previously established with Indonesia and encouraging the reform and democratisation process in that country. Confrontation with Indonesia will not produce these ends, nor will threats such as to withdraw economic assistance if Jakarta's position does not change. It would be more productive to follow a policy of continued engagement with Jakarta, bilaterally and multilaterally, emphasising the clear domestic and international

benefits to Indonesia of adopting an internationally acceptable stance on Timor and stressing our continued support for and commitment to efforts directed to that end. Thank you.

CHAIR—Thank you very much. The first question I want to address is the issue of the historical view. Whilst the focus of this committee will be very much on the present and the future relationships, it seems to me that this committee will, during its hearings, haul over a lot of history. It seems to me also, from some of the submissions that I have read, that history is easy to write 20 or 30 years on and, necessarily, the way in which history was viewed when it was written and the way it can be written 20 or 30 years on can change quite dramatically. How important, therefore, is the historical perspective to Australia in making its judgments now so that it does not get involved in a distorted view of what actually might have happened historically and which may well cloud the way in which we perceive the outcome of the processes in East Timor and with Indonesia?

Prof. Brown—There is certainly a lot of historical baggage that Australians and Timorese and Indonesians carry with respect to this issue. Personally, I do not think that the history of the Second World War involvement ought to be regarded as a very important matter today in terms of setting our policy on Timor, but I think the history of the last 25 to 30 years needs to inform what we do. We need to have some understanding of how the current situation evolved, from both the Timorese end and from the Indonesian end, as well as our Australian involvement with that. It is too easy to see back in history the things that we now want to understand it to have been; in other words, hindsight is a marvellous tool in viewing the history of a province or a region or whatever.

I think that is particularly true when people look at Australian policy towards Timor. The policy that various Australian governments followed from 1974-75 until the last year or so has been remarkably consistent and it has proved to be a policy of support for a position which has failed. Personally, I do not happen to think that there was much option in our policies in the past. The policies that we followed through the seventies and eighties, while they have turned out to be not productive, were the policies which were most appropriate at the time, but it would become very easy now to criticise those and to say that they were wrong. I do not happen to think they were; I think they were the most realistic policies that we had available to us at the time.

CHAIR—Having said that, do you believe we understand the evolution of change that has taken place within Indonesia itself with Suharto, with the military? Obviously, things have not stood still there over time. Suharto would have taken on a fairly strong role as a result of his rise to power, the increase in importance, the wealth, the privilege of Suharto himself and, as well, the changes within the military. I presume there would have been significant changes in the last 15 to 20 years there. Do we understand that, do you believe? Is there an accurate or reasonable history which we could have available to us which would give us some insight into the changes that have taken place there?

Prof. Brown—Histories are always the product of the people who write them and they will interpret those histories in different sorts of ways. We have tended to see Indonesia as being more monolithic and more unchanging than I interpret it as being. We have certainly not picked up the nuances of change, even in the last couple of years, with respect to Timor. I think we have always tended to assume that there is a single voice there and that voice is

always consistent in its policy. We saw nearly 10 years ago—in the early nineties, anyway—an attempt by some military officers to change the policy, not to allow a free vote or anything like that but certainly to allow significantly greater autonomy in East Timor. That was not a successful push.

I have said in my submission that for quite some time there have been significant numbers of political and bureaucratic leaders in Jakarta who have been of the opinion that Indonesia's policy on Timor also needed to be changed. As I have said, I do not think in most cases that was a matter of high principle, but it was a matter of what they saw as practical politics, that the cost to Indonesia of maintaining its position in East Timor was simply too high. I have heard that view expressed by people, for instance, in the public service, people who have had to defend Indonesia's position domestically or internationally. They found themselves disagreeing with it and they found themselves bearing the brunt of defending a policy that they simply do not regard as workable any more.

I think we have not paid sufficient attention to that group of people. We have tended, as I said, to lump everyone in government together and assume that they follow the same position. It is true not only of Timor, but of many aspects of policy in Indonesia. We have tended to have this monolithic view of the place and not to recognise the extent to which real politics goes on. It is not the politics that goes on in Australia necessarily; it is politics in the sense of toing and froing, of negotiating, with pressing of positions, of arguing positions, of winning some and losing some.

CHAIR—Yes. Just going back to the move by the officers that you referred to: what would have influenced those officers? Would it have been pressure from outside such as through contacts with Australians? Would it have been internal domestic politics? Would it have been purely and simply the pragmatism of deciding that this is an economic nightmare for us to continue down this path?

Prof. Brown—I am speculating but I would assume that self-interest is a powerful motivating force. Some military officers have believed for some time that they bear the brunt of policy in East Timor. They are the ones who have the casualties in Timor. As I said in my paper, that is a position which many of us would reject in the sense of saying, 'Well, if you weren't there in the first place, you wouldn't be losing people there.' But the fact is the military does believe that it has paid the price for Indonesian policy on Timor. I suspect that for some time now some of them have believed that that price is too high.

There has been, for a long while, I think, a number of divisions within the Indonesian military and there have been officers who have believed that the military in the long term needs to become a much more professional organisation and a much less political one. East Timor is, in that sense, the most political issue, or one of the most political issues, that the military is involved in. If you take the view that the military needs to become more professionalised and to be less involved in politics, then you have to take the view that the policy on East Timor is something which has to change. It is, as I say, one of the examples par excellence of the political role played by the military.

CHAIR—In terms of the military role—not justifying what they have done—we really do not have a full appreciation, in your view, of the tensions and the internal machinations

within the military of either a straight withdrawal or a straight handing over of independence to East Timor, that there are more factors at play. Really, if I read your paper correctly, what you are saying to us is that the military in Indonesia needs to be given a way in which they can move out of East Timor without it being seen as a defeat, a retreat where they are in absolute disarray and defeat. They need to be able to get out of there with some honour even whilst some people may well say there is no honour for the Indonesian military anyway. Is that a reasonable position?

Prof. Brown—That is the position I am taking, yes. I would put it in the broader context that we have to also take into account the changes going on within what will become the rest of Indonesia if Timor leaves. We are seeing political moves which are clearly reducing the political authority of the military. I think the military, while it is finding it difficult to take account of those changes, in many respects is resigned to the fact that it is going to have a smaller political role in the future than it has had in the past. But Indonesia needs a military which is professional, which is competent and which is confident of the role that it is playing. It is not in Indonesia's interests—and I would argue it is not in ours—to have a military which is, if you like, defeated and which is withdrawing from East Timor in a way which does not provide it any basis for recreating a more positive role for itself in Indonesia after Timor.

CHAIR—How do you see the current military involvement with the pro-integration militia groups? Do you believe that that belies the need for the military to be able to get an honourable retreat out of the East Timor situation if they seem to be, as is widely accepted, very much involved with the pro-integrationist militia group as opposed to the independence fighters in East Timor? Does this really show that the military are changing their attitude and their approach on the issue? Or is it a sign of a division within the ranks within the military?

Prof. Brown—Yes. I have heard a variety of explanations about the relationships between the military and the militias, ranging from an argument which says this is clearly and directly the result of policy by General Wiranto right down to an argument which says that these militias grew up largely as a result of positions taken by the military in East Timor and that their actions show that Wiranto is unable to control them. Again, I do not have first-hand knowledge of the internal workings of the Indonesian military but I would be somewhat surprised if the command in Jakarta has no capacity to stop those militias doing what they are doing.

My guess—and it would be a guess—is that they were established with at least the tacit support of the command in Jakarta, but I suspect that organisations like that, by their very nature being on the fringe of politics, become very difficult to control once you establish them. I do not think it is as easy as saying, 'They simply should arrest the leaders.' Those leaders have weapons and they have followers. I think it is something that ought to be done but I do not think it is something you could expect to be done in an instant. I do not think it is as simple as simply saying, 'If Wiranto issued an order he could stop it overnight.' I suspect that he could not. But I would also say that I do not think, in my opinion, he has done anywhere near enough to try to stop those militias in their actions.

Senator WEST—How would you stop them? Do you think it is the responsibility of the Indonesian army to actually stop them, or are you going to require a United Nations peace

process? It would not be peacekeeping, it would have to be peacemaking—and you get into all sorts of interesting situations.

Prof. Brown—In the first instance it has to be the responsibility of the Indonesian security authorities. Indonesia claims *de jure* authority over East Timor and therefore it accepts the responsibility for security in East Timor. One of the problems, I suspect, is that, as you probably know, starting in April this year, they have begun the process of pulling the police out of the military. Whereas previously the police were the fourth arm of the military, it is now in the process of becoming a separate one. One certainly hears some suggestions that conflict between the police force and the military has, at worst, not assisted the situation. There was a story in one of the Jakarta papers, I think last week, that suggested there had actually been some conflict between police officers and military to do with some aspect of security in East Timor.

I suspect whereas in the past there was a fairly clear line of authority, that line of authority is now not as clear as it used to be and the police are being charged with bringing this situation under control because it is seen as being a police matter, but they have not been the primary security force in the past in the territory, it has been the army.

CHAIR—It has been described in the popular press that there are rogue elements within the military in East Timor and those rogue elements are, in effect, difficult to control and that is the problem. I take it from what you are saying that that is not necessarily the case. You still see the Indonesian military as being in control of the situation whilst there may not be some first-hand knowledge of everything that takes place in East Timor. Is this typical of the organisation of the Indonesian military, do you believe?

Prof. Brown—That is difficult to say. If you look at the way in which the military has operated in other parts of the country which are distant from the centre—and the two most obvious places would be Aceh and Irian Jaya—you hear similar suggestions, that where there are acts of violence that take place by the military, the military's general view is that this is not a product of command policy but it is the result of local officers taking local decisions. They are often decisions which have caused deaths to occur.

It is difficult to see in the long term how that could be an acceptable explanation for some of the things that have occurred. If it occurs once or twice you might say this might be a rogue element somewhere. But it is a pattern which has occurred in a number of places over a period of time. East Timor is getting a lot more attention than the other places and I would have assumed that the commander of the army would see that it is in its interests, let alone any other group's interest, to retain and maintain and to exert control over people it has placed there. They are in the international and national limelight in ways that their actions in Aceh and Irian Jaya are not. In the past that has not necessarily been the case.

I could imagine in the past there could have been instances where local commanders acted outside the policy guidelines of Jakarta. But if that has occurred Jakarta certainly has not taken much action against them. There have been very few instances—there have been a few but very few—in which Jakarta has actually taken disciplinary action against troops that have taken part in human rights violations in places like East Timor. There are a few people who were tried after the Santa Cruz massacre of 1991 but they were basically middle and

low ranking officers—they were not senior officers—and their punishments were, by any standards, light ones.

CHAIR—In your view how important, from a security perspective, is the need for a united Indonesia? There are problems currently now in Aceh, there are problems in Irian Jaya. You spoke of the fear in the minds of the Indonesian military. Given that there are fairly disparate ethnic—as I understand it—backgrounds in the Indonesian confederation, if we can call it that, and given that there is a range of religious and other social and ethnic arrangements within the huge archipelago, how important from a security point of view for Australia is the maintenance of a federated or united Indonesia? Or, really, in the longer term, will it not matter if there is a break-up of the Indonesian confederation as it now stands?

Prof. Brown—If Indonesia was a federation I think it would have been in a better situation to deal with the current problems it has. It is not a federation, it is a unitary state. One of the suggestions that a number of Indonesians have been putting forward is that if it were in fact reconfigured as a federation, with provinces having much more substantial authority than they currently have, then that would go a long way towards ameliorating if not completely eliminating many of the tensions that have arisen in the country. Unfortunately, for basically historical reasons, it has been very difficult to have a sensible debate in Indonesia about a federal state as opposed to a unitary one.

In the last two years there has only been one politician who has openly argued that Indonesia should consider moving towards a federal system and that is Amien Rais. Other people have argued no, that the country is a unitary republic and its unitariness cannot be challenged. I think that is a major problem that Indonesia is going to have to face because the old-style unitary republic will not work in the 21st century. Would it be in our interests for that—

CHAIR—Can I just stop you there. What will cause that debate to change within Indonesia?

Prof. Brown—I think it is actually beginning. Two years ago, if you looked at the way in which political leaders and commentators in Indonesia discussed Indonesia, you almost never saw any references to the federation because it just was not an issue that people talked about. People are beginning to talk about it now and I think they are being forced to talk about it because they are seeing that, with respect to many of the underlying problems which the Suharto government had managed to control by force, once you withdraw that force those problems come up. In other words, I do not think the problems we have seen, for instance in Ambon earlier this year, suddenly emerged in January this year. They were problems that had been there for a long time.

When you had a very strong central government in Jakarta, it was able, in large measure, to keep a lid on those problems and, it also has to be said, was able to create economic conditions that provided many people with some economic reason for not doing the things that we have seen in Ambon. In other words, the sort of economic development we saw in Indonesia under the Suharto government did provide enough pay-offs for enough people to keep them relatively settled. A lot of people were of the view that, 'Yeah, things aren't very

good politically, but I've got a job, I've got an income. My children are going to school, and so forth.

When you take those two things away—the strong central government and the money—a lot of problems which had previously been there became more difficult than they were in the past. The point is that the problems in Ambon or in West Kalimantan or in Aceh have been going on for some time but they have been able to be kept under control. That is no longer possible and virtually everybody in Jakarta who takes an interest in politics—and that is a heck of a lot of people—can see that the old system simply will not work any more and, thus, you have to start looking for alternatives. I will come back to it in a second, but assuming that a break-up of the state is not an alternative, in effect the only real alternative is to devolve considerably more authority to the regions. In that sense the autonomy provisions in the East Timor ballot merely presage, I think, what is going to happen in many other areas.

I do not think it will go quite as far as what is apparently on offer to East Timor, but in April this year the parliament adopted a new set of regulations concerning the division of resources from the provinces which required that certain proportions of the income derived from the provinces had to go back to the provinces. In the past the provinces have got next to nothing out of the resources that they produce, out of the goods that come out of their territory. That is one of the major causes of the unrest in Aceh and in Irian Jaya. They are both resource-rich provinces but they have seen the income, the wealth, from those resources going to Jakarta and not staying in the local area.

Would it be deleterious to our interests to see Indonesia break up? I would argue very strongly that it would be, partly because I cannot see any break-up of Indonesia being a peaceful break-up. I cannot see any way in which Indonesia would break up along the Czechoslovakian model. If Indonesia were to break up, unfortunately I think Yugoslavia would be the model, not Czechoslovakia. I cannot see that as being in our interests, I cannot see it in fact being in anyone's interests, to suggest such turmoil, such conflict, such violence occurring in our region. If, however, all of that were to occur and we got through that period somehow and there were 10 independent states within what is currently Indonesia, that would make our dealing with the region much more difficult. We would have to deal with 10 separate sets of governments, most of which would not be very experienced in running territories, running policies, for each of which we would have to determine our own relationships.

It would multiply by several-fold the difficulties we would have in dealing with the region. It would also mean that South-East Asia would lose what has in the past been a reasonably steady influence of Indonesia—within ASEAN, for instance. If you take ASEAN, it has now got 10 members; it could be assumed that it would have 20 members if Indonesia broke up into 10 parts.

Senator WEST—If Indonesia breaks up, though, what are the ramifications for Malaysia and for the Philippines, particularly Malaysia, because they do share a common land border?

Prof. Brown—They share a common land border with Kalimantan. It would depend, I suppose, on how Kalimantan itself began to break up. One of the difficulties in talking about

a break-up of Indonesia is—and this is where I think it is not exactly like Yugoslavia—there are not the constituent republics as there were in Yugoslavia. Yugoslavia always had a Croatia and a Serbia and so on. There really are no parallels in Indonesia and if you were to look at the fracture lines—if it is going to break up—it is by no means clear that one fracture line would be Kalimantan or Borneo, or whether it would be parts of that island.

If we were talking purely hypothetically, if Kalimantan were to break away and say, 'We'll set up a Republic of Kalimantan,' then I suspect there would be discussions about whether Sabah and Sarawak would join with that. I know of no meaningful discussion in Sabah and Sarawak at the moment about that possibility, but if things were to change, then who knows? Mindanao in the Philippines would be an interesting situation, if you saw the emergence in Sulawesi of a powerful Islamic republic. But, again, I do not really see that as being a likelihood, given that Sulawesi itself has got strong Islamic but strong Christian connections as well.

It would certainly destabilise the region significantly but I am at a loss to know exactly how, because it just seems to me that that situation is so unpredictable. Trying to speculate on what would happen is beyond my capacity, I am afraid. I do not know how it would work out. But in a sense that is what would concern me: it would be such an unstable, unpredictable situation.

Senator WEST—Particularly when you combine that with the fact that Dr Mahathir is now 74, 75 years of age. Whilst he is going to run again, there is speculation that he will not serve his full five years. There is jockeying going on there for an heir apparent and we saw the interesting election that took place in Sabah or Sarawak—I cannot remember which one—earlier this year. Down the path, that must lead to some uncertainties.

Prof. Brown—I suspect it leads to considerable uncertainties in Kuala Lumpur. I suspect that Kuala Lumpur would be quite concerned if the current tensions in Indonesia continued—even if it did not break up. The trouble in West Kalimantan is very close to Sarawak. Singapore would not be entirely happy with the situation either. Singapore has always felt very vulnerable to what goes on in the region around it and Singapore has, for quite some time, defined its regional policies on the assumption that Indonesia retains its unity and is relatively calm and, in regional terms, is reasonably economically secure.

Senator WEST—What is the impact on East Timor going to be of the presidential elections and the sorting out that has to take place later on this year? You say you do not think Megawati will be the president. Can you speculate on who you do think will be the president, or is that far too difficult for a crystal ball?

Prof. Brown—No, I am quite happy to speculate, but I do not know how much responsibility I would take for my speculation. The reason why I say that Megawati probably will not make it is simply because in recent weeks there has been a lot of argument raised in religious terms that a woman should not be the head of state. That is clearly coming from a minority of people but it is a fairly powerful minority. My own view at the moment is that Habibie probably could not win the presidency but the opposition could lose it. Anyway, let us leave that to one side. Megawati has made it reasonably clear that she regards East Timor as part of Indonesia and that she does not support East Timor leaving Indonesia.

CHAIR—That is a commonly held view, isn't it?

Prof. Brown—Amongst Indonesians?

CHAIR—Yes.

Prof. Brown—I suspect the vast majority of Indonesians frankly could not care less. But if you were to take the people with a political position or who take a real interest in East Timor, I am not sure that I would agree with that.

CHAIR—All right.

Prof. Brown—I suspect that there is a significant minority—there almost certainly is a minority—as I am suggesting in my paper, who really have come to the view that the whole thing is more trouble than it is worth. Those are not necessarily people who believe that East Timor would not be better off in Indonesia, because I suspect a lot of them do think that the East Timorese would be better off in Indonesia. They are not necessarily people who have opposed Jakarta's policy on East Timor but simply people who have come to the view that it is just not worth it, having regard to the international opprobrium that Indonesia attracts as a result of its policy on East Timor and the domestic cost of it. Again, we can argue they would not have a cost if they were not there, but the fact is that Indonesia has spent a fair amount of money in East Timor.

I have heard many people say to me, and I have heard them say in public, 'What have we got in return for it? Nothing.' I have no means of knowing whether that is 20 per cent, 30 per cent, 40 per cent or whatever of the political public in Indonesia. I suspect it is a minority, but it is a minority that clearly exists. But to return to Megawati, even if she were to become president, I do not think she would in fact have any option other than to acquiesce in whatever is the result of the August poll. It is the same situation as the economy. A number of her advisers have said that they do not like some of the things the IMF wants Indonesia to do. They do not have any options. The international world will not allow them any other options. So although Megawati may want to argue that East Timor should stay part of Indonesia, were she to become president I do not think she would have the chance of doing that. She could certainly slow things down, but I do not think she could stop it.

I was in Jakarta in January when the new policy was announced. I watched it on television and I thought, 'I can't be hearing this right,' because it was saying things that I had not expected to hear being said. But when I was talking with a number of friends and colleagues in the next couple of days, quite a few of them put forward the view they thought this whole thing was in fact directed at Megawati; that it was more to be seen as part of the domestic politics of Indonesia that Habibie was trying to paint people like Megawati and Amien Rais and Abdurrahman Wahid into a corner. He was leading on a policy and the others were being forced to follow.

In the case of Megawati, if that were so, she has fallen into that trap. Others have not. Amien Rais, whose party did not get anywhere near the support that he was expecting to get,

was very clear that he would go along with the determination and supported it quite firmly. But his party got eight per cent of the vote, something like that.

CHAIR—You spoke about a strong central government, but one of the features of that strong central government was undoubtedly a strong military. The military in terms of their influence within parliament have withdrawn to a certain extent. How important will the military be in the future if they think there is weakness in the government, that the affair with democracy has not really worked as well as it should have? Is it likely that the military will reassert their authority, that they have only withdrawn a certain distance at this stage to gauge whether or not the attempt at being more democratic has worked? Is that a reasonable assessment?

Prof. Brown—There is a lot of concern in Indonesia that if the civilian politicians cannot put together a workable government, it might give the opportunity for some military officers to say, ‘Well, we’ve tried it. We’ve tried civilian politics. It doesn’t work. Therefore, we need to step back in and reassert control.’ I think that is less likely rather than more likely, in part because I think the military itself is now much less politically unified than it has been in the past. Clearly, if there was complete chaos, you might well find an attempt at a military coup, but it would be by no means clear to me that the military as a whole would go along with that. Certainly, if that started I think you would find massive civil unrest resulting from that, which would not have been the case even three or four years ago when the position of the military, the standing of the military—both the political standing and the military standing; that is the physical weapons they had and so forth—were much stronger than they are today. It seems to me that one of the major defeats that the military has suffered in the last two years is that its reputation within the country has fallen dramatically.

CHAIR—What has caused that?

Prof. Brown—Partly it is revelation to the broader public of the things that have been done in their name by the military in East Timor and other places, and the fact that the military was so associated with Suharto. Once you start pulling down Suharto you pull down the other bits and pieces that went along with him. The major problem that Habibie has at the moment is that he is seen as an offshoot of Suharto. One of the major problems the military has to try to deal with is that it has, in the past, been seen to be so close to what is now a clearly discredited regime. They are now carrying part of the opprobrium for that. The way they dealt with the demonstrations last year has clearly brought them into much greater disrepute. These were demonstrations which were occurring on prime time television in central Jakarta. They were not things occurring in the bush in Irian Jaya somewhere, where you may occasionally get a report in a newspaper somewhere. These were things which were occurring on the doorsteps of Indonesia’s middle class and in front of television cameras.

So these sorts of things I think have had a major impact on the way in which the population at large has viewed the military. It seems to me that the military is very well aware of that. They really have a major problem of trying to reassert a position within Indonesian society. If there is one thing on which certainly the so-called reformist politicians and party have agreed on it is that the position of the military in politics needs to be reduced further and further. I would assume that fairly soon after the new parliament meets there will be a move to remove the final 38 seats that the military have in that parliament. Two

sessions ago it was 100 and it is now down to 38. I think many Indonesians believe that is 38 too many. It is difficult to see how you can reverse that trend.

To repeat what I said before, I think if the military really tried to do that—I will not overdramatise it and talk about a civil war but it would be facing massive civil unrest. It is by no means clear that sort of move would succeed. It would look around and see that that sort of thing did not work in Thailand, for instance. This is just not the age for military coups.

Senator WEST—With the separation of the police from the military, how are the police going about undertaking the respect of human rights to an improved degree from the military, or are they not doing that? You talked earlier about a bit of tension at least in East Timor between the police and the military. Is that tension across the whole of the country?

Prof. Brown—I can only speak anecdotally. I have heard anecdotal information to suggest that there have been a number of cases in other places as well. I have heard stories of that happening in Kalimantan, for instance, but I cannot tell you I know that to be true; it, is merely what I have heard.

I would have to answer the first part of your question in a similar way. I do not know enough about how the police operates to have a very clear view of how it is handling its new responsibilities. I will say that the police certainly have had a reputation in the past for—how can I put?—not having high respect for the rights of individuals. They have not been involved in most of the major human rights abuses that we have seen. By ‘major’ I mean things like the Dili massacre and so forth. But the police have clearly been part of an oppressive apparatus in the past and have been quite prepared to use their authority, their force against dissenters, but I just do not know enough about how they are changing their structures and their training programs at the moment to be able to answer your first question, I am afraid, and I would rather not speculate without having the knowledge.

CHAIR—It has been said that General Wiranto has told Ramos Horta in Jakarta that he could close down the militias in East Timor within two days. That seems to run counter to what you told us earlier. Is there really a stronger influence than we may be led to believe?

Prof. Brown—From Wiranto?

CHAIR—From Wiranto.

Prof. Brown—As I think I said before, I do not have any direct, first-hand knowledge of how Wiranto is operating. He has authority to control the militia in East Timor. That must flow from the simple fact of Indonesia claiming the territory as part of its own. If he has the capacity to turn the militia off in two days, then we would need to be asking the question as to why he is not doing it. One could speculate on a number of reasons why that might be the case but I think increasingly those reasons are becoming less and less powerful. The degree of international attention being placed on it, the degree of international criticism of what is going on there that is coming not just in the press and in public but I believe privately through diplomatic channels and so forth, is increasingly powerful.

I do believe that Wiranto, as I said in my paper, and the military have a major concern with what is happening in Timor in terms of the territorial integrity of the rest of the country, but to continue to use the militias in the way that is being suggested, suggests a very cold, calculating approach to that. I am not suggesting that I think that is impossible, because it plainly is possible, but I find it less likely than the argument which says these militias are in fact, once they are set up and armed, very difficult to rein in. That is not to say that I do not believe Wiranto ought not to be doing more to control them, because I think I have already said I believe that he ought to be, but I find it difficult to see how you could turn them off in 48 hours. He asserts that he can; I would like to see that happen. But I suspect one reason why we are not seeing it happen is because it is not as easy as that. That is not a justification for those militias.

CHAIR—They have set up their own monster in effect?

Prof. Brown—I think it is very difficult to control. Yes, they have set up their own monster. They have mobilised relatively large numbers of people. They have allowed them to arm themselves and probably given them some arms. It seems to me they have gone out of control—or to some extent, anyway, they are out of control. If Wiranto thinks he can control them in 48 hours he should do so.

CHAIR—In the case that there is supposed to be a free and fair vote, if that in effect does not take place, do you think that is the end of the line? Do you think there needs to be then a more concerted effort to establish an environment where in effect the Indonesians can withdraw and that true self-determination can be given to these people to decide whether they want to be part of Indonesia in some manner, or a free and independent East Timor?

Prof. Brown—Yes, but then the question would be how you could do that.

CHAIR—The question really is now whether there will be a free and fair vote in August.

Prof. Brown—Yes.

CHAIR—There will be claims and counterclaims that, yes, there has been a free and fair vote; no, there has not been a free and fair vote; the registration process has not been allowed to proceed properly and so on. Undoubtedly, whichever side wins, there will be claims and counterclaims. I am saying given that the outcome is blurred, given that there is no decisive outcome in that sense, but let us just say for argument's sake there is a non-decision in effect that says, 'We will stay with Indonesia,' should that be the end of the issue, or do you see something else emerging whereby there can be another opportunity to determine the future of East Timor somewhere down the track? Undoubtedly, Megawati and others want to see East Timor remain part of Indonesia.

Prof. Brown—I cannot see any way in which the violence, the tension, the unrest in East Timor, is going to end unless and until there is a very clear and acceptable determination by the East Timorese about what they wish to do. If the ballot takes place in August and it produces a very unclear result—as some people are suggesting that it might, with 60 per cent in favour of independence, for instance—I think under those circumstances we would have to

be pushing very hard, as hard as we can, the line in Jakarta that that must be accepted. That means that East Timor must be allowed to pull out. But I think we need to recognise that there will be significant minorities in East Timor, no matter what the vote, who are going to be upset by it. It simply is not going to be 100 per cent either way.

CHAIR—How does one deal with that situation rather than see civil war eventuate? If Indonesia says, ‘Right, we’ve had it. The vote’s been done and we’re now pulling out. Fight it out amongst yourselves,’ how do we address that issue?

Prof. Brown—I think we have to address it multilaterally rather than bilaterally. The United Nations is already involved in East Timor and I would have assumed and hoped that under those circumstances you would find room for a much greater United Nations presence there. If that were the case, I would assume that we would be a significant part of that presence. We would have to be. We cannot do all the things we have done so far and then suddenly turn around and say, ‘We’re not prepared to contribute to a UN presence there after the event.’

CHAIR—Would that be in the form of a peacekeeping force or some observer status?

Prof. Brown—It would obviously depend on what the circumstances were, but if the situation was deteriorating even further and the Indonesians said, ‘We’re tired of the whole thing. We’re just simply going to pull out tomorrow,’ and leave a vacuum in which the militias would be free to do whatever they wished, then I would think that it would be necessary for there to be an armed force there to try to establish peace, yes. Nobody else is going to be able to do it other than the United Nations.

Senator WEST—Do you think the UN has the resolve to do that?

Prof. Brown—I think we would need to push as hard as we can to persuade the UN to have that resolve.

Senator WEST—Because if they do not have a strong resolve to do that, where does that leave Australia? If we go somewhere near the place, if the UN has not got a strong resolve we could well be left as the bunnies sitting there.

Prof. Brown—I do not have any smart, slick answers to that question, Senator. I think it would be a very difficult exercise for Australia to unilaterally take action there. I would hope that would be something we would be very reluctant to do. But the price of that reluctance would be to work as effectively as we could within the United Nations and with countries like the United States and Japan to try to persuade the United Nations that it was necessary for it to take action there.

Senator WEST—What would be the result of us taking unilateral action?

Prof. Brown—I do not know that unilaterally Australia could resolve that situation. I would fear that if we did get involved unilaterally we would not be able to resolve anything; that we would suffer casualties which would mean that the Australian population itself would become very uncommitted to such an action and it simply would not—I am repeating myself

now—but I cannot see how a unilateral action by us would actually resolve anything in East Timor. There is the old adage about it being easy enough to get into these sorts of conflicts but how do you get out of them? What would be our process for getting out? What would be the criteria we would use to say, ‘Well, now is the time to leave’? It is completely unclear to me exactly how we would be able to handle that.

Senator WEST—In relation to the UN there has been already some Indonesian media comment and speculation about UNAMET being on the side of the pro-independence groups. Do you think that is a softening up on the part of the Indonesian media to sort of sway people, sway groups, or do you think they are reflecting perhaps what is being said at higher levels within the military or the government?

Prof. Brown—It might, but the Indonesian media today are, it seems to me, greatly enjoying the freedom they have from direct government control which, of course, they have not had until quite recently. I suspect that what we are seeing in the media is actually the views of the people who are doing that writing. I do not see any particular evidence that it is part of a concerted campaign by anyone in Jakarta to soften up the Indonesian public to accept a view that says the determination is not valid because the United Nations was biased in favour of the independence groups. I have no doubt that many Indonesians do think that the UN is biased in favour of independence, but that is because many Indonesians are themselves, if you like, biased against independence and therefore will see anyone who is having even the semblance of neutrality as supporting the other side.

Senator WEST—What are the implications of this media comment?

Prof. Brown—I am not sure how big an impact it will have because Indonesia is still not a society in which the government is determined and responsible to the people in any open and general sort of way. I think the decisions on East Timor will be taken by a political elite which will take some notice of what public opinion says, but will not be overly swayed by it. You would have to propose a massive public outpouring of opposition to independence to believe that that will have a significant impact on government. I just do not think that is likely to occur. I do not think it is likely to have a significant impact on the actual decisions that are taken.

CHAIR—How do you see the role of Portugal evolving into the future? We have focused on Australia to a certain extent, Indonesia itself and, of course, East Timor. But given the tie between Portugal and East Timor going back a long way, what should it be now doing in the future?

Prof. Brown—What should it do, or what do I think it would do?

CHAIR—What should it or what would it do? They are two different issues, maybe.

Prof. Brown—Yes. I was going to say first of all that I really know next to nothing about domestic Portuguese politics and I really do not know that.

CHAIR—That is fine.

Prof. Brown—I would speculate that it seems to be unlikely that Portugal will maintain a long-term interest in a territory which is on the other side of the world which contributes little to Portugal. I do not see any reason why we would assume that Portugal would have a long-term commitment there. I could be wrong, but I just do not see much rationale for why they would. I think in a sense they should not have a long-term position there. If East Timor becomes independent, independent means that you stand on your own feet, it does not mean that you continue to be tied to a colonial power. I would like to believe that the Portuguese would see that they had some ongoing commitment to assisting in economic development, for instance, of East Timor. But once East Timor is independent, if that is what happens, then it needs to be independent and it needs to establish relationships with countries in its region and not be reliant upon a small country in Europe for political or economic support. East Timor would have to live in South-East Asia; it cannot live in Europe.

CHAIR—I accept that, but do you see Portugal as having any obligations, based on its long-term involvement with East Timor as one of its colonies over a long period of time? Even to this date Portugal is still recognised as being the colonising power there.

Prof. Brown—I would argue that ex-colonial powers, whether it is Portugal or Australia, have a moral obligation to assist in the welfare of countries that they colonised and drew economic benefit from. I would not differentiate in that sense between Portugal, us, the Dutch—any ex-colonial power.

CHAIR—Right. Unfortunately, we will have to stop there, professor. Thank you very much for your comments to this committee.

Proceedings suspended from 10.18 a.m. to 10.35 a.m.

PEAK, Ms Patricia Ann, Pastoral Associate, Noarlunga Downs-Seaford Catholic Church

RICHARDSON, Father Roy Francis, Parish Priest, Catholic Church, Semaphore Parish

CHAIR—I welcome to this hearing Ms Patricia Peak and Father Roy Richardson. The committee prefers all evidence to be given in public but should you at any stage wish to give any part of your evidence in private you may ask to do so and the committee will consider your request. The committee has before it a written submission from you. One paragraph and a number of sentences and phrases and two pieces of correspondence have been deleted from the public version of your submission. Are there any alterations or additions you would like to make to your submission at this stage?

Father Richardson—We spoke to Kathleen earlier about deleting some place names and what we have suggested is that we have a revamped version of it which we could give you which has what we think is most of the important information we want to share with you.

CHAIR—Under those circumstances the submission that you have already put into us will not be taken as your submission but the revised document that you supply to us will be taken as your submission, with the appropriate deletions you have made to that document, for obvious reasons in terms of security of people in East Timor, noted.

Father Richardson—Thank you.

Ms Peak—Good, thank you.

CHAIR—Is that document available today?

Ms Peak—Yes.

CHAIR—That will be available today and it will be publicly released in time. Thank you. For the purpose of obtaining an accurate record, would you remain behind at the end of the proceedings so that the Hansard officer can check spellings and sources of information provided this morning. I now invite you to make an opening statement and then we will proceed to questions.

Ms Peak—Thank you. I would like to reinforce the confidentiality factor and in this opening address we need to state that it is absolutely crucial for the safety of the people we have worked with that anything likely to identify them will not be made public. For this reason we will not be using names of people or places in which we have worked in East Timor. Our main aim in this address is to reacquaint you with our submission on the inquiry into East Timor and to expand on some of the points. This is an update of the original submission.

Five years ago, our Catholic parish formed a twinning with a parish in one of the most remote and poorest areas of East Timor in response to the particular suffering of the people in that community. We felt unhappy about the lack of official support given by the Australian government and wanted to find a way of supporting that was relevant and real to

them. The main aim of our twinning is to offer prayer, solidarity and practical assistance where possible. Our observations are based on our own experience of several visits and frequent ongoing communication with the people of this community.

In response to these visits, listening to the people's concerns and their need for assistance, we have actively raised awareness locally by speaking at schools, churches and community groups. We have received widespread affirmation and support from a whole cross-section of Australian society whenever we have talked about the situation in East Timor. We have met with local and federal politicians—including the foreign minister, Alexander Downer—who have advised us on assistance available from the Australian government.

Working in close partnership with AusAID and other non-government organisations, we have been granted funds for several major projects. In the years that we have been involved in this humanitarian aid we have seen a marked improvement in the everyday lives of the people who have benefited from this assistance, especially in the areas of health and agricultural educational programs.

The social, economic and political situation in East Timor is very complex and we do not claim to be experts in this area, but we do know that in the last 23 years the Indonesian migration and the strong military presence have caused the dispossession of the local indigenous people by forced enculturation, including customs, language and literature in schools and other public places. In more recent times Bishop Belo forced this issue on language with the authorities and won the right to speak Tetum in Catholic schools and worship and this been a great sign of hope for the people.

The people have no self-determination. There is a complete lack of social, economic and political freedom and it is evident to any observer that the East Timorese customs, culture and traditions are all threatened by the dominating presence of the Indonesian military. People are forced to comply with government regulations which include the flying of the Indonesian flag outside every home for one month to celebrate Integration Day and Independence Day. There are severe restrictions of movements, curfews, house arrests without reason, beatings and torture, especially of the youth. We have been present when these activities have taken place. Many of the young men seek sanctuary with us on church premises, as they believe they will be safe there.

With the deaths of an estimated one-third of the Timorese population there is resistance to Indonesian authority fuelled by continuing human rights abuses. We have visited villages where almost every family has lost a family member in this ongoing tragedy, therefore the people rely on the church for all their basic needs—social, emotional and spiritual. There is a complete lack of trust of the Indonesian authority and this includes a reluctance to use any of the facilities provided by the government, including medical and schools.

We believe we have been under surveillance by the military on all our visits and have often been through road blocks and checkpoints. In spite of this we have not been subjected to personal harassment or intimidation. We always identify ourselves as church personnel and have always been accompanied by our hosts when travelling around the countryside. On

returning to Australia we have been very careful about what we say publicly about our experiences in case of possible repercussions back in East Timor.

When we were there last year we noticed that some of the youth were becoming more aggressive, fighting for autonomy, because they witnessed the rioting and call for reform in Java last year. This in turn has aggravated the military who have responded swiftly and savagely. We have illustrated that point in our submission. We believe that some young men have been lured from West Timor, given bribes such as money and drugs, in return for intimidating the local East Timorese population. This activity was becoming prevalent on our last visit and has possibly led to the formation of militia groups.

Father Richardson—I would like to talk about the humanitarian and development assistance. We have already referred to the role of the Catholic Church in East Timor but we feel it is important for us to stress strongly the significant role that the church has played and is playing in the lives of the East Timorese. People have turned to the church for protection and leadership. The people's strength for resistance and liberation comes from their ability to unify communities with one another through the church. Under Bishop Carlos Belo the church has tried to protect the East Timorese people.

In its struggle, I think it is true to say that the church has developed a stronger sense of its own identity and culture there. The church has an enormous task and responsibility in its pastoral, liturgical, educational, health and welfare programs and needs ongoing support by the wider church and the wider world community to continue to be effective.

Bishop Belo has worked tirelessly for peace in East Timor and he has been acclaimed worldwide for his efforts. Missionary order priests and nuns have committed themselves to an ongoing presence and support along with local clergy. The missionaries face harassment from the military and immigration officials. They are often forced to leave the country every few months. We believe there is a need for the religious orders and other aid workers to be supported by the Australian government as they seem to be the only ones working closely at ground level with local communities across the country, giving consistent, ongoing support and leadership.

Widespread support is given by the Australian Catholic Church through Caritas and the St Vincent de Paul Society and the importance of this support for the morale of the people should never be underestimated. We have been deeply moved personally by the way we have been welcomed in every town and village we have visited and by the verbal and non-verbal demonstrations of the people's gratitude. We have been told by local Timorese leaders that our presence and ongoing support is like a light in the darkness for these people. We have been deeply impressed by the gentle dignity of these suffering people.

The prospects for a just and lasting settlement and the issues of self-determination are of deep concern. Going by our own observations and the many discussions we have had with local leaders, we have deep concern about the present and future situation in East Timor. We do not claim to understand the full political situation but, like a lot of other Australians, we have been very disappointed with past Australian government policy. Mr Downer has made some significant and promising statements lately indicating a long overdue commitment by

the Australian government to publicly support the people of East Timor, even to the point of making Australian armed forces part of a United Nations peacekeeping force.

Most of the Timorese we have come into contact with put a lot of hope in Xanana Gusmao because he has experienced deeply the plight of his people and has remained strong and resilient in echoing their aspirations. He has raised awareness in the international community about sensitive issues surrounding the reconciliation process, including the use of the militia to intimidate the indigenous population.

The rearming of militia groups in many parts of the country is a very disturbing development. These, we believe, are a mixture of some local people and some from West Timor who are promised privileges by the Indonesian military in return for spying on their own people. This is intended to lead to a destabilisation of law and order and is supposed to demonstrate to the international community that East Timor is incapable of self-government. This could lead to forced acceptance of autonomy and rejection of independence which would reinforce Indonesian dominance and strengthen the military's position. The result could be a forced withdrawal of foreign aid and a situation where the people are fighting amongst themselves.

The church has a crucial role in all this as it is the only force present, apart from the UN peacekeepers, who have the authority to intervene when human rights are abused. Church leaders regularly act as mediators between Indonesian aggressors and local people, who are frequently falsely accused and mistreated. Incidents such as these indicate that the authority and respect of the church is acknowledged but it could be undermined by local warfare between pro-integration and pro-independence groups. We have seen some examples of that in recent times. Bishop Belo is under great pressure from all sides trying to help his people in the best long-term solution in their ongoing struggle for justice and peace. He is revered by the majority of the populace. The people rely on him in this time of crisis to be vocal on their behalf and clear thinking.

We have also been encouraged by recent statements by Mr Downer about our government's new willingness to offer practical assistance to help the people of East Timor in the process toward autonomy and self-determination. This process, we believe, is fraught with many potential problems and difficulties because of the people's basic lack of education and experience in positions of decision-making in government departments.

For these reasons they will need a lot of guidance and support if they are going to be able to govern themselves and the process will inevitably be slow and gradual. Any Australian personnel sent to East Timor—whether they be part of a United Nations peacekeeping force, government officials, welfare workers, police, military, et cetera—will need to be fully orientated with local customs and conditions, otherwise there is a grave danger that the people will continue to feel oppressed and powerless. Workable strategies and a review process need to be put in place to bring about positive, lasting change.

They will also obviously need to consult closely with church personnel at all levels. Our main fear is that, without outside assistance, the people will be left to fend for themselves, which could lead to starvation and disease and even the death of a nation. They are really the main things we wanted to say to you today.

CHAIR—Thanks very much. I understand the nature of your submission and your intention not to deal with the names of places or people, so I want to take a reasonably broad approach to this to get an Australian perspective because in your submission you spoke about a twinning relationship involving the Noarlunga parish and, as I understand it, the Semaphore parish?

Father Richardson—Semaphore is involved now, yes.

CHAIR—Are there other parishes of the Catholic Church in either South Australia or elsewhere that have similar arrangements with parishes within East Timor?

Father Richardson—Yes, there are. The main one we know of here is Blackwood. They took it on because they heard what we had done at Noarlunga. We know there are some parishes interstate but I could not name them all for you now.

CHAIR—It is not something that is specifically a South Australian project?

Father Richardson—No.

CHAIR—It is something that has broader acceptance out there within the Catholic Church.

Father Richardson—Very much so.

CHAIR—Does it have the support of the apparatus of the Catholic Church on a diocesan basis? You did mention Caritas, for example, with which I am familiar.

Father Richardson—Yes.

CHAIR—Could you give us some sort of idea of the infrastructural support you get out of that?

Father Richardson—Our archbishop is fully supportive of what we are doing. He wrote the covering letter when we first contacted the parish that we have twinned with up there. There is a bishop interstate who is actually responsible for our Australian church's relationship with the church in East Timor and he has visited there regularly, as have other Australian bishops, particularly in recent years. There are religious orders of nuns and brothers from Australia who have got people working there on a regular basis.

CHAIR—So it is quite extensive?

Father Richardson—Yes.

Ms Peak—It is, yes.

CHAIR—I am trying to look at the network of support from Australia. It is not isolated to one parish.

Father Richardson—No.

CHAIR—It is definitely not isolated to one state.

Father Richardson—No.

CHAIR—When the decision was first taken at the parish to support a twinning relationship with a parish in East Timor, what was the response from the general congregation? Was there a broad acceptance, was there a reluctant acceptance offered, or were there even negative aspects to the fact that this decision had been taken, because I would imagine that even as far back as five years ago it would have been a fairly bold step in one sense.

Ms Peak—We formed a justice and peace group in the parish and we were looking at areas which we wanted to support. East Timor came up as the main one. It was taken on by the whole community. We started writing to this particular parish in East Timor. We wrote for many months before we got any response, but we felt that if those letters got through, it would be a sign of hope for the people and encouragement to them to know that there were people in Australia that cared for them and were supporting them. We continued to do that for several months before hearing from the parish priest of this particular community.

After several months of communicating through letter, we had raised quite a bit of money within the parish because people were supporting it and they wanted to find a way of helping that was relevant to them. We did not want to send money and not know where it was going to go. We decided to visit this community to see what the needs were. That was a great eye-opener for us because it was a very remote place and the ideas that we had before leaving were not relevant when we got there. We saw that it was our idea of what they would need; it was not what was required within that community.

CHAIR—Could I stop you there, because that is a very valid point. The perception we have here in Australia of the conditions and what is happening in East Timor this very day are quite different from what one would necessarily experience there.

Ms Peak—It is.

Father Richardson—Sure. It is like chalk and cheese, really, especially the areas where we have been closely linked. They are indigenous people. They live very simply off the land. By our standards, materially they are terribly poor; there are very common things like having to go down to the river to get the water every day with containers because there is no water in the town or the village and often the children have to do that. Their houses could not be more simple than they are; no electricity, no running water, none of the creature comforts we take for granted. They just do not have them.

CHAIR—You were saying this determined your range of priorities, rather than what you thought, what you perceived—what you actually found to be their need.

Ms Peak—Exactly. What was important was the education of the children, because the school was extremely basic. There was one room. They did not have any pens or pencils or anything like that, or any books at all. We set up a sponsorship program to educate children.

CHAIR—Could you comment as you go through. You did say that, whilst you felt you were under surveillance when you were there, you did not feel harassed. Was this the same in your assessment of the aid and the actual giving of the aid? Did you feel at any stage that you were being overtly scrutinised in the aid that you were giving, or the assistance that you were providing?

Father Richardson—Rather than being scrutinised, I think the major difficulties we have had have been when we wanted to send money there, which was sometimes done by telegraphic transfer from a bank here to their bank up there. It has taken weeks to get into the bank account of the priests who are running the parish and we do not know why. It has got there eventually, but it is a bit nerve-racking when you do not hear anything for two or three months and you are wondering whether they have got it or not. We organised a lot of books which we were not able to take up ourselves. We made arrangements with Qantas to fly them to Darwin and then there were some priests in Darwin from the same order as the ones we were working with in Timor and they arranged for them to get over there. But when they got to Kupang they were impounded by the Indonesian authorities for quite some time and the priest there had to fight to get them released, for obvious reasons—the authorities there being concerned about what damage, from their point of view, these books might do to the Indonesian cause.

CHAIR—I am also trying to work out whether you are perceived as being subversives from without.

Father Richardson—We do not think we are. We do not really know that for sure because they have not told us. They have never tried to stop us going in. The only kind of trouble we have had is that we get two lots of interrogation. When we land at Bali or Kupang initially, they check us out there with immigration; then when we get to Dili we get checked out again. But they have never stopped us going in.

CHAIR—Sorry, Ms Peak, please continue to tell us about the aid.

Ms Peak—Yes. What we have tried to do is enable the people to help themselves. That has been our main aim. Given the right education and assistance, the people are quite capable of growing their own crops and that sort of thing. That is what we have endeavoured to do. We have set up education programs for women on health. As I said, we have provided a sponsorship program for children in schools, simple agricultural programs, even a sewing workshop so people can learn to make their own clothes. They seem very simple but it really helps a community to support themselves and that is what we have endeavoured to do. By going there ourselves and working with the people in that community and with the priest, who is very capable, we have been able to get a lot of those projects off the ground. As far as we know they are still going. I spoke only last week with the priest and he was saying that a lot of those things are going very well.

Father Richardson—The education aspect is very significant. Most of the adults have had little or no education at all. They are basically illiterate. As you can imagine, it is quite a battle to get them to see why it is important for their children to have education because they have got by without it, they think. They do not realise the huge value that education can have for expanding their understanding of life and the world. Every time we have gone there we and the priests there have made a point of, whenever we speak to people—and often it is whole communities—talking about the value and importance of education so that the children have a chance for a better future.

CHAIR—On that very issue, would it make more sense, therefore, given the seeming lack of education that exists within East Timor, for there to be a graduated process that goes to complete independence from Indonesia, rather than one day being part of Indonesia and then the next day waking up and finding that one is now independent and one has to grapple with all the difficulties associated with independence; that there should be a process which involved looking at primarily the education of people and bringing them along to a position where they could successfully manage the issue of independence? One of the problems that the East Timorese may well face themselves—and I do not know because I have never been there—may be that they end up with a group who are educated and who will put themselves in a position of power, where they in an independent East Timor disadvantage their own. That must be a fear that is held by some organisations, I would imagine. Is that reasonable?

Ms Peak—I think that is a reasonable assessment, yes.

Father Richardson—Yes. You have described very well what we believe as outsiders would be a good way to go: to have a carefully thought-out, gradual process. As we said in our submission, not many of the local people seem to have had any opportunity to be involved in running things in the country, except at the local community level. When it comes to government departments or anything like that, the Indonesians bring their own people in to run them, so they do not have the experience. We would have a great fear that if independence was declared next week and they are told, ‘Go for it,’ a lot of them would not know where to start. It really needs to be very carefully thought through and it is going to need a lot of good leadership by all sorts of people. I really believe that some of our own Australian people could have a very valuable role to play here, going in with the right kind of expertise and knowing how to work alongside the locals.

CHAIR—I am not wanting to start an interchurch warfare, but what is the involvement of the other churches? You are from the Catholic Church and obviously there is a fairly strong Catholic influence within East Timor. Are there other churches in Australia supporting the work that you are doing and doing similar work in terms of twinning operations, or is it something, because of the historical nature of the Catholic religion that seems to have been implanted through the Portuguese, that sees mainly a dominant role by the Catholic Church?

Father Richardson—We do not know of any other churches that are actively involved there and I think that is probably for the very reason you have just described—the Portuguese background and the Catholic involvement.

CHAIR—On a broader ecumenical basis then, is there support from other churches within Australia for the work that you are doing and, if so, what sort of support is it?

Ms Peak—I only know of one organisation here in South Australia, which is Christians in Solidarity with East Timor. I presume this would be people from all Christian denominations who would be part of that. But I do not know of any specific church community, other than Catholic Church communities, who have a direct involvement.

Father Richardson—But having said that, what we have found whenever we have talked to people—and we have been asked to speak to a variety of groups, including political parties and all sorts of people who are interested because they have found out that we have been there—is the overwhelming support from people, once they find out what is going on. They say, ‘What you’re doing is really important and we think the government needs to be doing a lot more than it has done,’ and this is right across the board. People have said that once we have raised their awareness of what is going on there, they become much more aware.

Whenever they hear anything on the news, they take a lot more notice than they used to and are a lot more concerned about East Timor than they used to be. Overwhelmingly, they say we have to do a lot more to help these people. Given the kind of moral debt we believe we owe them from World War II, when our soldiers were looked after amazingly well by the local people when they were fighting the Japanese, when something like 40,000 East Timorese lost their lives sheltering our soldiers in the mountains, we believe we have got a debt to them from there. That has been largely ignored, at least at the official level, until very recently.

CHAIR—Could the parish that you are assisting be described as being typical of the non-central areas of East Timor?

Ms Peak—It is a remote area, as we said before. There are 35,000 people in that parish and it is spread over—

CHAIR—Would most of those people be indigenous?

Ms Peak—Yes.

Father Richardson—Yes.

CHAIR—So areas such as those that you are servicing are not those that have been subjected to the transmigration process.

Father Richardson—Not so much. There are major centres not far away that have been.

CHAIR—It is in the major centres that the transmigration has taken place.

Father Richardson—Yes.

Ms Peak—We are talking about 18 villages within this parish and it is spread over quite a large area. They are mainly indigenous people that live in the villages. Some of them have been forced to leave their own area and go to more remote areas because of being intimidated; they have been moved away from their traditional village area.

CHAIR—It has been put to us in submissions that it would be very difficult for the Indonesians to simply withdraw overnight. It has been put to us that there has been intermarriage between Indonesians and some locals. It has been put to us that Indonesians do have some stake in aspects of the economy, substantial stakes, and they would not want to surrender that overnight. It has also been put to us that, for unification reasons for the Indonesian archipelago, Indonesia would not want to just cede independence overnight to East Timor. Given that one might not be able to achieve all the goals and aspirations for East Timor that the majority of East Timorese aspire to, what sort of transitional arrangements should we be supporting as a nation for the East Timorese people, given that we do not know the outcome of the August ballot at this stage.

Father Richardson—We would suggest a graduated autonomy that eventually leads to independence, that would take into account the sort of things we have talked about already—the need to educate local people in how to run things and for them to get experience in that, and the need for guidance and help. If some of that can come from Indonesians who have a good attitude about it, fine—and I take your point about some of the vested interests that Indonesia has in the place. When you look at the map of Timor, you can see from their point of view why they would not be happy to have only one half of the island belonging to them—that is in West Timor—and the east being separate.

But from our reading of the history of Timor, there are factors which go back centuries, of tribes fighting each other and killing each other and then eventually saying, ‘This is stupid. Let’s do something sensible about this and we’ll divide the island in half and have half each.’ We might be wrong, but our understanding of what happened with colonisation is that that is the reason why the Dutch took West Timor and the Portuguese took East Timor—because they recognised they were completely different and the people did not want to mix and the whole colonisation process took that into account. When the Dutch left Indonesia after World War II, that is why Indonesia only got West Timor and not the east. The people do not want Indonesia to run their country. It is as simple as that. That is why they have been fighting them for 24 years. They want their own destiny.

CHAIR—You did mention something there that will be important in any resolution of the problem, no matter what happens; that is goodwill. Have you found any Indonesians of goodwill in the operation of your twinning relationship? Whilst it is very easy to characterise the Indonesian military in particular for their brutality and their harshness, have you come across any Indonesians of goodwill who you believe would want to see not only an amicable but a fruitful outcome for both the Indonesians and also the East Timorese, because I think there are Indonesians who want to see a win-win situation. Have you come across them?

Ms Peak—We have not come across the experience of mixed marriages at all, so I cannot answer that. I am sure there are Indonesians of goodwill and I know the priests of the parishes we have worked with have Indonesian leaders who they can talk to and work with quite well, but there are others who are quite difficult. So I think it depends on the individual people. In relation to the vested interests, as far as we know the shops and organised banks and government organisations are all run by the Indonesians.

CHAIR—What is the influence of the Chinese community in that part of the world?

Ms Peak—There is quite a significant number of Chinese people in Dili.

Father Richardson—We have not seen any in the rural areas.

Ms Peak—We did not have any in the rural areas at all. The people we are talking about are indigenous Timorese people and that is our only experience.

Father Richardson—We have come across people like the doctor, in one of the main towns we have been to, who is Indonesian, who is quite loved and trusted by the local people because he is there to serve them in the way a doctor should. We have been told that some of the police chiefs who work in some of the villages have a good attitude to the local people, so I guess it varies from one person to another, depending on their stance and the way they see fit to carry out their duties and the way they treat the people.

CHAIR—How do you deal with that group who are seen as the minority, who want to remain part of Indonesia if the majority vote for independence? The shoe is on the other foot, so to speak. How does one stop the flow of blood which might follow on from independence?

Ms Peak—I was quite surprised at the rapid increase of the militia from 12 months ago to now. We saw no evidence of that at all when we were there, apart from the youth becoming more vocal. That was for autonomy. Again, it is outside our experience. I can only comment on what I have heard in the media.

CHAIR—Fair enough.

Father Richardson—If we can make a comparison, there do seem to be some similarities with South Africa and the situation there, albeit on a smaller scale. Obviously, when there has been a lot of violence over a long period of time and a lot of bloodshed and people being killed, it is not easy to turn that around overnight. We all know that, from the experience of what happens in other places. This is where I think it is going to be crucial that they have good leadership. If Xanana Gusmao, for example, could have a similar kind of leadership role in East Timor as Nelson Mandela has had in South Africa, that could be a really important factor in unifying the country and helping them through this transition with a minimum of bloodshed. But, obviously, it is not going to be an easy thing to do.

Senator WEST—You did not see any militias when you were there on your previous visits?

Father Richardson—Not personally, no.

Senator WEST—From your contacts there, have you any idea what the elements are in the population that are making up the pro-independence and the pro-integration?

Father Richardson—What the ratio of numbers are?

Senator WEST—Yes.

Father Richardson—Has he said anything to you about that recently, Pat?

Ms Peak—No, not really.

Senator WEST—My concern would be that if the ballot goes ahead in August and 60 per cent vote for independence, what happens to the other 40 per cent.

Ms Peak—The only thing we were told was that people were being drawn from West Timor to inflate those numbers. That is on very good authority, that that has been happening.

Senator WEST—But you have no proof of that. You have no evidence of that. You only have anecdotal—

Ms Peak—Exactly, yes.

Senator WEST—How strong is the Catholic Church in Indonesia itself?

Father Richardson—It is a very small percentage of the population, maybe something like three per cent.

Senator WEST—What is the relationship between the Catholic Church in Indonesia and the Catholic Church in East Timor?

Father Richardson—It is somewhat separate. The Vatican has taken the lead in that. Because of the situation in East Timor, the decision has been made from Rome to keep Timor separate from the Indonesian Bishops Conference, which has actually left Bishop Belo quite isolated in some ways. There is now a second bishop in East Timor as of a couple of years ago. They have to report directly to Rome.

Senator WEST—Apart from having those dioceses separate, what is Rome's attitude to the issue?

Father Richardson—They have not said anything publicly that we know of. I think they are being very careful diplomatically about what is said. Bishop Belo himself is very careful about what he says publicly, for obvious reasons, but it would seem from what we have been told that Bishop Belo is being strongly supported from Rome in what he is trying to do. They are obviously working in other ways. They would have contacts with the Portuguese government, for example, and other people who are key players, trying to help resolve the whole situation. I am not privy to all the fine details, obviously.

Senator WEST—But they have not come down the line and said, 'Get out and behave yourselves,' to you people here in Australia.

Father Richardson—No, they have not. I think the fact that we are being supported by our own bishops here means that would not happen. If we were just going in off our own bat with no backing from our higher authorities it would be a different matter, but we are being fully supported.

Senator WEST—After the annexation in 1976 we heard a lot within Indonesia about transmigration. How much transmigration has there been into East Timor? Have many of the people who have gone in from other parts, say through military and government sources, been going in on rotation and coming back out again? Have you some idea, from your experience, how many have actually been put there and left there?

Father Richardson—We could not give you numbers, but we have seen a lot of the housing—have we not, Pat?

Ms Peak—Yes.

Father Richardson—That has been built for them to live in. They get housing provided for them by the Indonesian government whereas the local people have to basically provide their own thatch huts and that sort of thing. They get solid construction houses and we have seen whole suburbs of them in some of the bigger centres.

Ms Peak—You can sort of tell the Indonesian children from the Timorese children because they are the ones with shoes and clothes and bicycles. Those other children are really quite poor. There is a distinct difference between the two different communities living there.

Father Richardson—When there is trouble, often the Indonesians who have migrated there feel under threat and sometimes you hear reports of them going back to other parts of Java or wherever because the local people are starting to stand up for themselves. There are a lot of difficulties with that.

Ms Peak—It is not a particularly attractive place for people to migrate to unless there is some incentive for them because the whole infrastructure of the country is in disarray and therefore it is quite difficult for people to live there, regardless of whether you are Indonesian or Timorese. I am sure that the people who do go there, go there for a purpose and there would be some very strong incentives for them to go there. They would be things like housing being provided for them and government jobs and things.

Father Richardson—Government officials, basically. Another aspect of your question is related to the movements of the military. There was a big show made around about a year ago of taking significant numbers of military personnel out of East Timor. The Indonesian government was trying to give the impression that they were cutting back the numbers but that was actually quite an illusion. All they showed were the ones going out, they did not mention the ones who had gone in the week before to replace them.

Senator WEST—Yes, we have certainly had stories of that in other submissions, too. A changeover was due a fortnight before and a whole stack had come in and they could show them leaving because they had finished their tour of duty.

Father Richardson—Yes.

Senator WEST—What is the pattern of land ownership in East Timor?

Father Richardson—Could you just clarify that a little?

Senator WEST—The pattern of land ownership. Not so much in the towns or the biggest settlements because obviously the government has put the houses there, but out in the village areas, what is the pattern of land ownership? Has land been given to Indonesians or does the Catholic Church have a large amount of land? Who owns the land? Who has the title deeds to it?

Father Richardson—I do not think the church owns land except where it has churches and schools. Our impression would be, in the area where we have worked which is very rural, that the people probably share ownership of some of the land where they grow crops and just have their little patches outside their house and the backyard, as some Australians do.

Ms Peak—Yes. It is a very meagre sort of existence as far as growing crops is concerned. It would be for their own immediate use and they have a bartering system within the markets. Any excess gets taken to the market. There is no growing of crops for any commercial purposes in the area we were in.

Senator WEST—No, but for them to actually use—I am presuming they are not hunting—or move over the land, what rights do they have?

Ms Peak—I really do not know.

Father Richardson—Their movement is fairly restricted because hardly anyone has their own private transport. They either walk—and you see people walking all over the place along the highways—or they catch the bus. They do not move around nearly as much as we do here.

Senator WEST—But even within the village areas the villages must take up some space. Are there communal gardens or are there individual gardens? Are there individual allotments or are they communal allotments?

Father Richardson—They have their gardens around their own homes, but that is about it. In the towns we have visited, there is hardly anything in the way of a town garden or anything. It is just not like that.

Senator WEST—Not even in the small villages?

Ms Peak—No.

Father Richardson—Very small areas. In the centre of the village you might have a little bit of a garden sometimes, but it is not substantial at all.

Ms Peak—The only main buildings would be the church premises and any government buildings. The rest are very basic huts which the people live in and a small amount of land around where they would grow their own vegetables. They can get moved off that land—we

know that. They can be forced to move to areas which are less attractive as well as not having access to water or fuel, because they have to collect wood to cook. They can just get moved on by Indonesians. If they want them to move they will move them.

Senator WEST—What happens to the land? Are the Indonesians taking that land? What are they doing with it when they are moving them on?

Ms Peak—When I say ‘move them on,’ they intimidate them in such a way that they just do not want to live there any more. They move away just to get a more peaceful existence.

Senator WEST—Is this the Indonesian police or military?

Father Richardson—Both.

Ms Peak—Both, yes.

Senator WEST—Is there any difference between the police and the military?

Father Richardson—That is hard to tell, really. The military seem to be more pervasive, they are just everywhere. The police numbers do not seem to be as big but there is a police chief and a contingent in every town and significant village. Some of the military, we have been told by the locals, do not always identify themselves as such. They do not necessarily wear military clothing—some do and some do not—so sometimes the people are not even sure who is spying on them, if you like, but they just know there are people in their midst who are doing so. It is really heartrending when you listen to the stories of these people. In some of the villages every family has had one or more of their members killed by the Indonesians over these years. It is just genocide that has been going on here for a long time and it has been largely ignored by the rest of the world.

Senator WEST—What do you see the role of the UN in East Timor to be? Do you see that it has a role, first of all?

Father Richardson—Yes, we do. I guess this is where we would readily acknowledge that we do not necessarily understand all the finer points of this. Given what we know about what has been going on, especially recently with the militias, I think they have quite a crucial role in helping to sort all that out before there is any chance of this referendum being a free vote. The next few weeks are critical regarding that. I would think that whatever the outcome of the referendum they are still going to have an important role for some time. That relates to your earlier question, Senator Hogg, about how there can be the least possible bloodshed with whatever kind of transition occurs. I think the UN really have a very important role to play.

Senator WEST—Is it a role for the UN or do you think there is a role for individual countries to fulfil, unilaterally rather than multilaterally?

Father Richardson—I am not sure whether it would be a good thing, say, if Australia was the only country having personnel there working with them, given the whole complexity

of our relationship with Indonesia and that they are near neighbours and we have to live with them. Obviously, that seems to us to have been a very important criterion in the past as to the line that successive Australian governments have taken in relation to Indonesia. While I think it is important that we do have some people there helping the East Timorese transition, probably it might be in our national interests that we are not the only ones and there are other countries there as well. Whether that is through the UN or whether it is done in other ways, I do not know. I think that is really up to people like yourselves to work out.

Senator WEST—Do you think the referendum will actually take place?

Father Richardson—God knows.

Senator WEST—That is crystal ball gazing—and revelations from up there.

CHAIR—Can I ask you a question related to that. Whilst the registration process has only been under way for a few days, as we now know, do you have any contacts there who have indicated already that there are difficulties with the registration process in the area that you are involved in? I am not talking about other areas. Or is that sort of contact not able to be undertaken by you? I am just trying to get a first-hand feel, as you may well know from the parish that you twin with that there are difficulties in registration, or there are not difficulties, or it is going smoothly or whatever. You have no feedback?

Father Richardson—Not directly, no, because the communication is extremely difficult there. There are no telephones directly into that area. The mail, we think, is possibly getting intercepted now where it was not before. We wrote to one of the priests there about two months ago and we have not had a reply. The other priest who has come to Australia recently says that he probably has not had the letter delivered.

CHAIR—In your submission you said that you have been very careful when you came back to Australia not to say anything publicly about your experience because of possible repercussions in East Timor. Have you any evidence of that happening, where you have said things?

Ms Peak—We know when we visited a village, two or three days later houses were set alight or the marketplaces.

CHAIR—That is while you were there.

Ms Peak—We do not know if that is directly involved with us being there or not. But that is the sort of intimidation that happens.

CHAIR—But you have no direct evidence where you have come back and, let us say, maybe said something to your local parish about your trip—and I would imagine that you do in some way.

Father Richardson—Yes, sure.

CHAIR—That in some way someone has found out that you went to such and such and you spoke to such and such and as a result of that happening there have been reprisals against such and such. I am being very careful not to use names, as you said.

Father Richardson—No, we do not have any of that. Can I just make one comment there? The concern has been perhaps mentioned while we have been there—the priests have said sometimes the rebels increase their activity even before we get there when they know we are coming because they think this is a good opportunity for them to get some more support and that leads to bloodshed, just because we go there to visit. There are those tensions going on all the time.

Ms Peak—Even in the school the teachers sometimes are too afraid to go to school because of the intimidation. Therefore, for a period of two or three weeks the school was closed down because it was too frightening for them.

Father Richardson—And that is recently, this year.

CHAIR—That is recent?

Ms Peak—Yes, just a few weeks ago.

CHAIR—You mentioned the relationship between AusAID and other NGOs and yourself. Can you just expand on that relationship. Has it been difficult to establish the relationship with AusAID and other NGOs in the formulation of an aid program, and what would be needed in the future, more importantly, for groups such as yourselves?

Ms Peak—We would go and identify an area of need. The parish priest would put a proposal forward. It would come to me. He tried dealing directly through Indonesia and it was never acknowledged that it was received, so the only way we could get the proposal through to AusAID would be through myself and directly dealing with Canberra.

CHAIR—And without naming the other NGOs—for obvious reasons, I presume you do not want to name them—

Ms Peak—No.

CHAIR—how important are they to you in this process?

Father Richardson—Crucial.

Ms Peak—Absolutely. They are the people who are supporting us in our work. We have managed to get some very significant programs going, like water to areas where they did not have water and health programs, formation centres for educating people. We have built two of those and that has been with help through AusAID and other organisations. They are mainly Catholic organisations. Even smaller projects, like setting up the workshop with sewing machines—that was done through a local community. So it can be something very small or something quite significant.

Father Richardson—But we could not afford to fund the bigger projects just from the money we get from our parishes.

CHAIR—Yes, I accept that.

Father Richardson—So we have had to rely heavily on AusAID and other groups.

CHAIR—Can I assume that AusAID are operating projects independent of you.

Father Richardson—Sure, yes.

Ms Peak—Yes.

CHAIR—On a larger scale, within East Timor, as well as other NGOs?

Ms Peak—They have set up a water pipeline. Our proposal complemented the work that AusAID was already doing and they were happy to accept our proposal and fund that as well because it was complementary to their existing work.

CHAIR—The reason I am asking these questions is because, regardless of what might happen, there needs to be a coordinated approach in terms of aid, rather than people giving aid indiscriminately because aid may well then be wasted.

Father Richardson—Sure.

Ms Peak—Exactly, yes.

CHAIR—What form of coordination process do you see being necessary in the distribution of aid post whatever might happen in East Timor?

Father Richardson—We think it is quite critical that leaders at the local level are capable people who can make sure that the aid is used properly. That is what we have been most pleased about in the work that we have been doing. The priests we work with are very good organisers and very thorough in implementing projects and making sure the money is used properly. They are able to galvanise the people to do the work.

CHAIR—I am not trying to imply that people are not doing it without a good heart and without a good intention. But sometimes people may well fall over themselves if the aid work is not coordinated. What group should be the focus for the coordination of aid within East Timor? Should it be an internal organisation within East Timor and, if so, if aid is coming from Australia, what should be the coordinating place from within Australia? Should it be a group like yours, should it be a government group such as AusAID?

Father Richardson—Ideally, if it could be a combination of people like AusAID and our Caritas people, which is the church's relief agency—they have got people on the ground in East Timor. They are actually sponsoring a group of seven Australians who are going there in a couple of weeks time to be there through the referendum period. So probably

AusAID and Caritas in particular I would see as being really important to keep following this through.

CHAIR—We could probably talk for a lot longer. It has been very enlightening. We have got through the session without naming names and I think that was important to you.

Father Richardson—Yes.

CHAIR—You have given us a different perspective from what other groups will give us when they appear before us over the next few days and weeks. So we thank you for your time.

Ms Peak—Thank you, Senator.

Father Richardson—Thank you very much.

Proceedings suspended from 11.40 a.m. to 11.50 a.m.

ALCOCK, Mr Andrew Haydon, Information Officer, Campaign for an Independent East Timor (SA) Inc., and Spokesperson, Australian Coalition for a Free East Timor

HANNEY, Mr Bob, Secretary, Campaign for an Independent East Timor (SA) Inc.

MONIZ, Mr Agostinho, Member, Campaign for an Independent East Timor (SA) Inc.

PARSONS, Dr Michael Gerard, Executive Committee Member, Campaign for an Independent East Timor (SA) Inc.

TONKIN, Ms Miriam, Treasurer, Campaign for an Independent East Timor (SA) Inc.

CHAIR—I welcome representatives and associates of Campaign for an Independent East Timor to this hearing. The committee has before it a written submission from your organisation. Are there any alterations you would like to make to the submission at this stage?

Dr Parsons—In terms of actual alterations to the submission, no.

CHAIR—Thank you. I now invite you to make a brief opening statement and then we will proceed to questions.

Dr Parsons—Thank you very much. I have been asked to open today on behalf of the Campaign for an Independent East Timor. In the first instance I would like to refer to paragraphs (b) and (c) of the terms of reference—that is, Indonesia's military presence in East Timor and reports of ongoing conflict in the territory and the prospect for a just and lasting settlement of the East Timor conflict. At the outset I would like to reiterate CIET South Australia's position that Australia should call upon the United Nations Security Council to immediately deploy an armed peacekeeping force to East Timor to supervise the withdrawal of the Indonesian military and the disarming of paramilitary forces.

I add that if Australia was willing to spend half the energy and resources that it injected in its successful campaign to keep Kakadu off the endangered list of world heritage areas on lobbying General Wiranto, we would not see the current level of paramilitary violence in East Timor. Remember that the defence minister, General Wiranto, has publicly boasted in the last few weeks that he is in complete control of these militia and could disarm and disband them in two days. The inquiry should consider the question: why has he not done so? Is it simply because of a lack of sufficient pressure or because he has been encouraged not to do so by the Australian government? I want to make some reference to that when I talk about the sacking of the head of AusAID in Dili.

I would now like to turn to the question of Indonesia's military presence in East Timor. It is necessary to understand the continuing massive scale of this presence, in contradiction to what has been officially expressed by the Indonesian government, to appreciate the need for the deployment of UN peacekeepers which I know has been discussed in some earlier submissions. You may be aware of this report and similar reports that came out in the *Australian* on Friday, 30 October 1998.

CHAIR—Could you read the headline?

Dr Parsons—The heading reads, ‘Leak shows no East Timor troop cuts’, and ‘Alatas red-faced as army witch-hunt begins’. I will make reference to what these headings refer to.

CHAIR—That is fine. It is very hard when reading *Hansard* later on to identify something if it is just held up.

Dr Parsons—The Indonesian armed forces suffered the most serious leak in its history in October 1998 when hundreds of pages of detailed information surfaced, showing the status of its military presence in East Timor. This information was leaked by Manuel dos Martires, who was an East Timorese staffer with the Indonesian army in Korem, the regional military command in Dili, for the past 10 years. He worked for the last five years as their chief statistician in Dili. He was responsible for maintaining all troop deployment, personnel and payroll records, all of which he leaked. From these records we know the names, the pay rates and other personal details of the armed forces’ personnel, as well as the structure and the chain of command of the Indonesian military network in East Timor.

This proves conclusively that the so-called militias exist as part of a formal command structure in the Indonesian army and not commanded by some rogue elements within it, as some would have us believe. From the figures supplied by Manuel dos Martires in November 1998, we also know that, at the same time as the Indonesian military forces were officially being reported as leaving East Timor to be replaced by the police, they were actually increasing, and there is no evidence to say that they are not continuing to increase.

The ratio of Indonesian armed forces to the local East Timorese population on the basis of these figures is one of the highest in the world—that is, one troop per 25 local people. If you wish, I can go into further detail on some of these figures, but you can obtain all of Manuel dos Martires’s leaked documents from the department of foreign affairs because they were sent to all the embassies with representation in Jakarta.

The conclusion I would like to stress is that, as part of the 5 May agreement, the tripartite agreement, the police have the security responsibility in East Timor for the consultations in the August ballot. It is not the responsibility of the Indonesian military. However, the sophisticated nature of the Indonesian army network in East Timor does not allow you to discriminate easily between police and army. We know from Manuel dos Martires’s chain of command structure that the militias, one in each region or district—there are 13 different team groups—are under the command or usually receive their direct orders from Kopassus elite special forces and these forces are not under the control of the police. So although the police have the responsibility for maintaining security, it is the military in fact which are in charge of the militias.

I would now like to address paragraph (a) of the terms of reference, which relates to economic, social and political conditions in East Timor, including respect for human rights in the territory. I will not say much here, except that it is only a short step sideways from the military to the economic. We know the chain of command of the militias—they receive orders from the Kopassus elite special forces. Kopassus until recently has been under the control of Colonel Prabowo Subianto, Suharto’s son-in-law, and has received regular training

by Australian troops. You will be aware of the Channel 9 *Sunday* program on East Timor that was broadcast on 30 May, revealing unsavoury aspects of this training.

Kopassus has been virtually the Suharto family's private army in East Timor. I draw your attention to the work of Dr George Aditjondro which explains why. The Suharto family interests own some 40 per cent of East Timor's land, as well as its major sources of revenue. It is clear that the protection of these assets is a major determinant in the current security situation. If you have not seen Dr Aditjondro's work, it is coming out in a book and I do have some copies here of a press article which he wrote and which I can give to Hansard. An article from the *Age* of 8 May this year is headed, 'Suharto clans' Timorese connections'. I have three copies here to submit to you.

CHAIR—Yes, if you would give that to the secretariat and we will take that as an exhibit.

Dr Parsons—As I said, the article also refers to the forthcoming book of Dr Aditjondro, who is currently at the University of Newcastle in New South Wales. I would now like to go to paragraph (d) of the terms of reference, which relates to Australia's humanitarian and development assistance in East Timor, and make three points. The first is that the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade did assist in this conference for the strategic development planning for East Timor held in Melbourne under the auspices of the Council for National Resistance of East Timor, the CNRT, from 5 to 9 April 1999. I was invited to be a resource person at this conference in the economics and environment section. There were 79 papers delivered by East Timorese professionals at this conference which ran for five days. I think this is a great starting point from which to consider future humanitarian assistance in East Timor.

The second point I would like to make is that there has been a very comprehensive account of East Timor's human resource development program which is in this research report from Oxfam: *East Timor human resource development program research report*, dated February 1999. It also sets out statistics on health, education and other areas of humanitarian assistance. I bring that to your attention as well.

CHAIR—Having brought those to our attention, have copies of that documentation been supplied to the secretariat for us?

Dr Parsons—No.

CHAIR—Are they readily available to be supplied?

Dr Parsons—They are readily available to be supplied.

CHAIR—Thank you.

Dr Parsons—And this report is available on the Internet.

CHAIR—In which case if you give us the Internet address, we would appreciate it.

Dr Parsons—Okay. The last point I wish to make is the one I referred to earlier—that is, the sacking of Lansell Taudevin, which I will not get into as a personnel matter, but I particularly want to point out the implications of the sacking. I spent a week with Lansell Taudevin at the time he was recalled to Australia. Lansell Taudevin was head of the AusAID water supply project in Dili. According to him—and he has gone public on this on ABC Radio—he was sacked because he was providing too many early warnings about the massacres that were going to take place in East Timor. This was just prior to Likisia. At the time he was with me the Likisia massacre happened and he immediately contacted AusAID, saying, ‘Look, all this alarmist reporting you said I have been doing that got me sacked has now happened. Won’t you reconsider and let me go back to East Timor?’ They said, ‘No, you’ll never work again in East Timor.’

I think this has not been a good start to Australia’s relations with a future independent East Timor. I may add that one of the quotes Lansell gave me was that he was accused of fraternising with Fretilin. He said it is impossible to work in East Timor among the local population and not be accused of such fraternising. I will leave that to your suggestions.

I would like to conclude by saying that the position, as I have said, is that Australia’s so-called constructive engagement policy with Indonesia on East Timor has proved an abject failure. At the Bali summit, which was the latest last-ditch attempt to rescue this policy, it only highlighted its bankruptcy. It did nothing to stop the militia violence. We currently have a vacuum in foreign policy on East Timor that allows the Indonesian army and its militias to do whatever they like to secure an unfree and unfair ballot in August. Thank you.

CHAIR—Are we to hear others from your group now? Could I just get an indication before we proceed how many people are going to make individual submissions—not that that worries us. Everyone at the table?

Mr Alcock—No others, no, just Agostinho.

Mr Moniz—As a member of the Timorese community from Adelaide, I would like to add a plea to the government of Australia. Coming from a kingdom called Laclubar in the highlands in the middle of the island, I understand the situation our country is going through at this moment—a very harsh moment in our life in politics and wars. Again, I just want to use a little bit of my obligation—being from the people that have been living with the people since even before the Portuguese—to talk about our history, social and cultural base.

As an East Timorese, I take this opportunity to speak to you on behalf of my ancestors and fellow countrymen for whom the chance to express their views is not possible, especially in moments of need like the present time. Hopefully, in the next few weeks we will witness the creation of a new nation before the end of this millennium. Perhaps I am too optimistic about the situation but that is just a simple human instinct, believing in the value of the strength of its spirit.

There is no need to remind the international community of what has been happening in East Timor for the last 24 years—a painful episode perhaps added to this century’s tragic chapter. Yet, barbaric treatment of innocent and defenceless human beings continues

throughout the regions of East Timor. It is being perpetrated by the Indonesian army's militias.

We all understand that those atrocities are designed to coerce the East Timorese population to vote for autonomy rather than independence in the ballot of 21 and 22 August 1999. Therefore, I plead on behalf of my ancestors and the people of East Timor for the Australian government to step up pressure on the government of Indonesia and its army to comply with the historical agreement between Portugal and Indonesia reached on 5 May 1999 in New York. Just like our leader of the resistance once said, 'We fight because our people demanded it, our land asked us.' Xanana Gusmao is a very special person for us at this present moment. He is not only a leader but a charismatic person who actually united all Timorese to stand up to believe in their freedom, their country and their dignity. He needs unconditional freedom to participate in this process to determine our future.

Much has been said about the horrors of World War II, but it only lasted for six years and by comparison to this the East Timorese people have kept their courage and dignity in the face of torture, rape and the death of one-third of the population for the last 24 years. We must be given a chance for independence.

We are prepared to accept the results of the ballot as long as it is the truth. Hopefully, the Indonesian government will have the same approach. The international community must accept their moral duty to ensure the right to freedom of expression of their fellow human beings in East Timor. If autonomy is the choice of the people we will contribute to the best of our ability towards the better future of our country. The Indonesian government will then be responsible for the fulfilment of the people's expectation.

If independence is chosen by the people the Indonesian people and their government should understand that human beings everywhere strive for freedom and it is our birthright, the basis of our dignity. We intend to elect a transitional government under the auspices of the United Nations for a period of two years. Its responsibility will be to create viable conditions for a free and fair election of the first government that is going to lead East Timor as a nation.

The reinstatement of the traditional rulers needs to be accomplished because throughout our long history they have been seen as leaders, symbols that inspire and identify the roots of history, culture and social existence within our society in which the democratic principle has always been present. They were protectors of their people, resisting aggressors, especially during the Portuguese occupation of the last 500 years.

They are needed to balance the power in future governments of East Timor which is vital in order to avoid the tragic events of the past. In a 'federation of kingdoms of Timor Loro Sa'e', the synthesis of the constitution must be based on our cultural traditions and history to be relevant. On 11 March 1999, the 'Senate of Liu Rais of East Timor' was formed in Macao. There are 30 signatories.

In conclusion, I would like to express our belief that freedom is the space that we need to survive. When it is denied us, the irrepressible spirit to fight for its return is created.

Many have thought that East Timor is not really viable to survive as an independent nation. Please give us a chance and we will prove it. Thank you.

CHAIR—Thank you. We will go to questions. Senator West?

Senator WEST—Some of you may have heard the question I was asking the previous witnesses about land ownership. I am wondering what the traditional land ownership, land habitation, was prior to the Indonesian annexation. Is it communally owned? You also said, I think, Dr Parsons, that 40 per cent is owned by Suharto and his family groups. What was the previous land ownership figure? What would you expect the land ownership to be out in the villages and in the more remote areas?

CHAIR—Could you give us that historically during the colonial period of Portugal?

Senator WEST—We would like an understanding of what it used to be and what has happened and maybe what you would like to see happen in the future.

Mr Moniz—In the late 1500s under the Portuguese empire, people landed in East Timor. Before that East Timor was a country under constitutional monarchs. From what I understood from my elders, telling us the history of East Timor, the land was basically under control of families, of kings. It has been divided throughout those centuries before even the Portuguese got there. You see, in those days, if kings married, they had to marry only along the line of kings. Apparently, if the members of the kings' families married some others, they gave land plus—the whole content of that particular piece of land, including people. It was all just a social structure they had designed in such a way because East Timor is a very small island.

We used to have just a small island next to the group, and the whole island was only under that kingdom. When Portuguese people got there it was a land called Wehale, under that kingdom of Wehale. We allowed them to enter the land under the basis of the trust. They came with the tradition to invade us. Our ancestors, to make sure that they were honest to their words, cut blood from their wrist and joined it with the drinks and they ceremoniously celebrated their intrusion in Timor—as friends, you know—because they promised our ancestors that they were going to respect and honour our tradition, our kings and our homes. But in fact they did not, because after a few years they began to use a system of training locals to speak Portuguese and penetrate, infiltrate into the country. They had begun to realise what the country could offer them: apart from the spices, there are sandalwoods, gold, so many things. It was seen that the whole thing really was surviving, you see.

We do not need houses like the westerners do, perhaps because we are not really worried about the structure of those types of houses, because it is not really suitable for our weather. But economically, we were very sustainable; our people were hard-working people, they got land under the kings. The kings do not own all the lands in particular. Actually, they are the caretakers because people that live inside that land own everything. They work together with the king. When somebody wants to talk to the king, they do not have to go submit papers here and there; they just talk to the second eldest of the village and they join a group and go and talk to the king, and this is how things are.

But with respect to what has been portrayed of East Timor history and culture outside, throughout those years of the Portuguese era, I can guarantee that 50 or 60 per cent of that is not really true. A friend of mine, a family member, used to say, 'It was written while the priest passed by and he wrote it in the way he feels like,' and this is how it became known. As I say, we do have a language but it is not in written form, but our history and all of this has been passed orally. I mention these traditional rulers because—and you can ask any Timorese—people are taught our history and culture and this social structure. Our modern politicians are not really worth it but we are working on that, so we can have a viable, stable government in the future.

The worry for the wellbeing of the people is very important for us, and the tragedy of the last 24 years was very painful for us. It is just a matter of regaining it with dignity. With respect to the Suharto business of getting the land in Timor, we know who sold that to them, but of course we relied on the international community to fulfil their duties, because East Timor belongs to the East Timorese, not to a foreigner.

Senator WEST—That has answered that one for me. You said that you were prepared to accept a ballot if it is true. I wonder how you know whether it is going to be a true result or not.

Mr Moniz—Trusting in the capacity of the United Nations and international community assistance, and especially ensuring that the Indonesian government's intimidation is stopped.

Senator WEST—The registration for the upcoming referendum has commenced. Has anybody any evidence or any information as to how they think that is actually going? Does it appear to be free? We have already heard allegations that people from West Timor were coming across to register. Have we heard any allegations or had any evidence that this is happening, that there is intimidation occurring and people are being discouraged from registering?

Mr Alcock—Just on the first day of registration, on the 16th of this month, there was a problem where people who were pro independence were actually attacked by militias. That is certainly one case we know of inside East Timor. The other problem that we are also seeing is that people outside Timor who wish to have a vote are having to travel long distances to go and register. We know of cases here in South Australia where East Timorese have to go to Melbourne, first to register, and then they have to go back to vote.

CHAIR—Why?

Senator WEST—Maybe if I ask the question: how many registration points are there in Australia for East Timorese people to register?

Dr Parsons—Under the 5 May agreement, it was agreed that Perth, Darwin, Sydney and Melbourne would be the only places that the Australian Electoral Commission would allow registration and balloting for this election. The lowest population of East Timorese in Australia is in Perth—about 1,000 voters. In South Australia, we have in Adelaide 70 eligible voters. Those people are finding it extremely difficult to get to their nearest polling booth, which is Melbourne, because many are elderly, and they simply will not be able to

participate in this ballot, simply because the agreement that has been organised has not allowed them to do so.

We have tried our desperate best to get some amendment of this, so that even a passing Australian Electoral Commission officer who may be bringing a ballot box from Perth perhaps across to Melbourne or from Darwin down to Melbourne could meet our East Timorese committee at the airport and just register and ballot them there, to enable them to access the ballot. But at the moment we feel that under the current arrangements they are being disenfranchised.

Senator WEST—There are no postal vote provisions?

Ms Tonkin—Another suggestion we could put forward is that the Portuguese consul should be empowered to conduct a ballot wherever there are a number of East Timorese.

CHAIR—I think the difficulty is that the ground rules have been laid, and to start changing the ground rules in midstream becomes very questionable indeed, whether one agrees with the ground rules or not. You referred to the 5 May agreement. I do not know if I have the whole or part thereof of the agreement, but could you point out to me the relevant section in the agreement?

Senator WEST—Where it is.

Dr Parsons—Yes, I do not know where that is. I only got that advice from the Australian foreign affairs officer that we tried to talk to, and the Australian Electoral Commission, saying they were not able to alter the polling booths. But if it is possible that we are getting the wrong advice, then we would be glad to hear it.

Senator WEST—That was a UN decision, presumably, if it is in that agreement.

CHAIR—One would suspect that the UN decision would have been made on the basis of consultation with Australia. I do not want to get bogged down on this issue, not that I do not think it is important, but if you have got other issues such as that you should indicate them to us because our time with you is valuable. So Australia is a problem in the sense of South Australia.

Mr Alcock—Yes, and also Brisbane, of course.

Senator WEST—Any idea of the size of the East Timorese community in Brisbane?

Mr Moniz—Yes, a friend of mine up there also—

Mr Alcock—How many people?

Senator WEST—How many?

Mr Moniz—About the same number in here, about a hundred and something, yes.

Mr Alcock—We do have a document produced by the East Timor Relief Association which we will supply to you, which does spell out the agreement for the voting. But it is not a problem confined to Australia; it is a problem for smaller East Timorese communities in the diaspora in other places around the globe.

Ms Tonkin—I draw your attention to the United Nations document, the agreement under which a vote for autonomy will take place. They do state that ‘outside East Timor special registrations’—

Senator WEST—Which number?

CHAIR—What page? Give us a page and a number, please.

Ms Tonkin—It is annex 2 of 3. It is the paper entitled ‘Agreement Regarding the Modalities for the Popular Consultation of the East Timorese Through a Direct Ballot’.

CHAIR—Annex 2, yes, page 2.

Ms Tonkin—Under ‘Registration’ it says:

Outside East Timor, special registration centres will be opened in Jakarta, Yogyakarta, Surabaya . . . with adjustments to be made as appropriate.

Senator WEST—That is fine.

CHAIR—So there is a physical problem in relation to people actually registering. That is one aspect to the registration problem, and that is external to East Timor.

Mr Alcock—That is right.

CHAIR—I think the other part of Senator West’s question goes to internal problems.

Mr Alcock—We do have a problem in East Timor where something like over 60,000 East Timorese people are refugees in their own country, and many of them are very fearful of having to go back to their own villages to register. The reason they have left is because of militia and military terror, and now they are expected to go back into those same environments to register, so that is very threatening for a lot of people. Recently, many parts of the media that have got journalists in East Timor are saying that people are saying, ‘Well, we’ll probably have to go back and take the risk but we’ll do this because we want our independence so badly.’

CHAIR—I do not want this to be taken the wrong way but it does appear to me that one of the problems is that there are a large number of people who do not have necessarily the requisite educational skills to participate properly in the ballot. I am not saying that in any derogatory sense and it should not be taken that way, which leads me to the concern about having a free and fair ballot. I am just wondering if you have considered that this ballot may be taking place too soon, and that what really needs to be taking place is a transition process which would see the people firstly getting the requisite education to understand what the

process was about, and then, having got that in place—and of course addressing the environmental issue of safety and freedom of movement for the people—proceeding down the path of holding the ballot.

The one fear that I have in all of this is that, after the August ballot, the UN, to the best of their ability, may say that it was a free and fair ballot, but it may well be said that it may not be the outcome that people desired as a result of the ballot process. Then one might feel that there is a constraint there on pursuing the issue again at a later time. Have you thought this through?

Mr Alcock—I can see your point there, Senator. It raises several points. I think there is the question of whether the people are educated enough, but I have worked in South-East Asia in the past, and what usually happens during elections is that people are assisted to know who to vote for. Instead of relying so much on language, they rely on symbols, and my understanding is that what is happening in Timor is very much the same: there will be written language and also symbols will be used.

CHAIR—I understand that.

Mr Alcock—The other thing I was going to talk about was the whole question of security in terms of the freedom to vote, which I think you implied in your comment. To send 300 United Nations police officers who are unarmed to deal with an army which has wreaked genocide in that small nation of East Timor over the past 24 years really is irresponsible on the part of the world community. They and the militias they train, pay and recruit cannot be expected to keep the peace. What we have been calling for, which is contained in the document we have tabled, in the letter we sent to John Howard and President Clinton, is that when they talk they should look at ways of improving the security for the people of East Timor so that they can participate freely in the coming referendum, which is so important.

You might well be right; to achieve that we may need a bit more time. But then again there is a bit of a Faustian bargain here. On the one hand some people want to have this referendum very quickly but, on the other, a lot fear that if they do not have it now there will be a new government leader in Indonesia who is most likely to be somebody with no sympathy whatsoever for an independent East Timor. So the Timorese people really are in a very awkward situation.

CHAIR—They are caught between a rock and a hard place.

Mr Alcock—They certainly are.

CHAIR—If I could interrupt you there, for the purpose of the record, the letter that you referred to as being tabled before the committee is, as you said, a letter addressed to Mr Bill Clinton, President of the USA, and Mr John Howard, PM of Australia, dated 13 July, under your letterhead. It is now a document formally before the committee.

Dr Parsons—I think it is more security than literacy that is at risk in terms of derailing the ballot. I speak again as someone who has worked in Papua New Guinea, Vanuatu,

Samoa, and Aboriginal Australia, in elections. Many of those people are illiterate but can quite competently deal with substantially complex issues in elections. Sixty per cent of the East Timorese population are illiterate, according to the latest report from Oxfam that I referred to earlier. However, that does not mean they are stupid.

CHAIR—I do not think that should ever be interpreted from my comments.

Dr Parsons—Correct—and therefore they are quite competent with a yes or no type of referendum, one where you have a box that says ‘Accept’ and another which says ‘Reject’. I think it is more a matter of security than literacy, Senator, that is going to affect the ballot. In the last couple of days the United Nations’ David Wimhurst reported on the situation in Likisia, being a district and not just a township, where they had, three metres away from polling booths for registration, a Besi Merah Putih office.

Senator WEST—What type of office?

Dr Parsons—Besi Merah Putih, which is red and white iron—iron for the red and whites—one of the most active militias that was involved in the massacre at Likisia, in the church there, in April. The United Nations asked for that to be removed but the BRIMOB and the local police did not move it.

CHAIR—This is obviously crucial. Regardless, again, of what the outcome might be, if one looks at annex 3 of the agreement on East Timor, relating to popular consultation, of 5 May, it says clearly:

The Governments of Indonesia and Portugal and the Secretary-General of the United Nations,

Agree as follows:

1. A secure environment devoid of violence or other forms of intimidation is a prerequisite for the holding of a free and fair ballot in East Timor. Responsibility to ensure such an environment as well as for the general maintenance of law and order rests with the appropriate Indonesian security authorities. The absolute neutrality of the TNI (Indonesian Armed Forces) and the Indonesian Police is essential in this regard.

Paragraph 3 says:

3. Prior to the start of the registration—

and given that we are now post the commencement of registration—

the Secretary-General shall ascertain, based on the objective evaluation of the UN mission, that the necessary security situation exists for the peaceful implementation of the consultation process.

Having read those two paragraphs from the 5 May agreement, do you believe that it places in jeopardy the ballot to be held in August? If so, what sort of credibility can be placed on the ballot that will take place in August?

Mr Hanney—As has already been mentioned, security is obviously the issue. I believe the United Nations personnel involved are doing their best to achieve a fair and free vote.

Unless security is dramatically increased we do stand the chance of seeing a ballot which cannot be regarded as such and therefore would have to be invalidated.

CHAIR—What happens if it is not viewed as a free and fair ballot? What sort of attitude should we adopt?

Mr Hanney—We believe that because the United Nations have never accepted the forced and illegal integration of East Timor into Indonesia, it is a duty of the United Nations to still assume, as they do, that East Timor is a non- self-governing territory, although diplomatically the United Nations of course has to deal with the present government of Indonesia. But because they have never accepted it and because the act of invasion and annexation is illegal, the United Nations, to our mind, really is bound to take action without getting approval from the Indonesian government. To this point, they have done this as a diplomatic way of solving a problem with the least damage physically and in other ways to the East Timorese people and also to Indonesia.

We believe that unless this recent agreement, which was verified a couple of weekends ago, between Jakarta and the United Nations is kept, unless the troops at least are kept to their barracks, then it is up to the United Nations to send in some kind of peacekeeping force without the approval, if needs be, from Indonesia.

Senator WEST—What do you think the ramifications of that are?

Mr Hanney—Such things are not taken lightly. One notes that this has been done around the world in other places without even United Nations approval or sanction. In this situation, however, we have a country which has never been accepted by the United Nations as part of Indonesia; for about 16 years the United Nations has been carrying out a dialogue not with East Timor but with Portugal and Indonesia. It has now come to this stage and we believe that Indonesia has no right to expect the United Nations to give them some kind of de facto control over East Timor. Therefore, obviously, this may cause some international furore but that is not the concern of the East Timorese. It is the duty of the United Nations and all decent nations, I believe, to ensure, regardless of Indonesian government qualms or military concerns, that the United Nations does what is needed.

Senator WEST—So you are suggesting they do a Kosovo sort of situation where they go in and bomb the tripe out of them, put the armed forces in and run all over the place?

Mr Hanney—Not at all.

Senator WEST—What are you suggesting? What is your solution? The Indonesians say, 'No, thus far and no further, and we have got our tens of thousands of military there and we'll take you on.' What are you suggesting?

Mr Alcock—Our document that we sent to President Clinton and the Prime Minister, John Howard, did talk about a number of ways of doing this without bombing the tripe out of anybody. Basically, what we wanted to see happen were international sanctions, especially on military aid. Only two days ago I discovered that Australia is spending \$6.5 million on aid to a regime that has committed these crimes. We want to see an outcome that does not

end up like West Papua—or Irian Jaya, as the Indonesian occupiers of that country call it—where a similar number of people have been wiped out. About a third of a million people have been wiped out in West Papua as well as East Timor by this one regime. We find it quite amazing that the democratic world has sat back and armed and trained the military of this regime as it has carried out these incredible crimes.

So the first thing we are calling for is that there should be a cessation of all military cooperation with this regime. You might argue that it is a new government but the new government has not taken over yet. The military is still largely in control and is dictating what is happening on the ground in East Timor. We also note that just a few weeks ago the Blair government sent Hawk attack aircraft to Indonesia. They intend to send more. Two days ago the people of Dili were intimidated by the use of those aircraft over Dili; they swooped the city of Dili.

Senator WEST—Your dot points about cessation of military cooperation and IMF/World Bank sanctions are not what is worrying me. It is your first point, which is:

Immediately assist the UN to place an adequate peacemaking mission in East Timor that has the capacity to control the Indonesian military and its militias.

What are the ramifications of that? I do not have a problem with lobbying them, I do not have a problem with sanctions, but I want to know what you think the ramifications are of peacemaking rather than peacekeeping and unilaterally the UN saying, ‘Right, we’re going in.’

Mr Alcock—Senator, the situation is that there is not a peace to keep in East Timor. There has been violence and genocide over the last 24 years. It is also true that the international community has not dealt with Indonesia appropriately, from our point of view, to help achieve any sort of peace. The present police mission cannot achieve that, as we can see. There are still actions occurring every day, basically.

Senator WEST—Yes, but that is not my question. What are the ramifications of stepping in with a UN force? We know the Indonesians have 20,000 military there. It is ideal guerilla territory. What are the ramifications? What size force would you have to send in? What sort of equipment would you have to give them? If you sent in an armed force, what reprisal actions would be taken by the Indonesians on the East Timorese? These are the questions I want answers to.

Dr Parsons—I think what we envisage is the same as what the UN is currently envisaging under its present arrangements. That is, if the situation gets out of control such that the registration prior to the ballot is derailed, then the UN Secretary-General does have the power to go back to the UN Security Council and inform them that the current arrangements are not working. They could upgrade the type of UN deployment in East Timor under the auspices of the UN Security Council. We know that in the past the idea of sending in a police enforcement force was argued against by Malaysia, which is the acting chairman of the UN Security Council in emergency session at the moment, and Bahrain. Malaysia has now changed its tune in recent days. It has come out against what Indonesia is doing in East Timor in regard to the militias. The Secretary-General has to report back, I

think, in around 10 days time in relation to the process of registration and the ballot, yet it still has not been determined.

So what we would consider is that there is not something new, not like a NATO force coming in but an upgrading of the existing force and increasing deployment of armed peacekeepers. In relation to peacemaking and peacekeeping, we say peacemaking because, of course, the peace does not exist. As I said to you, Kopassus elite special forces are continuing to come in through the Batagarde Road from West Timor and are coming in through land and sea as well. They are the ones that are keeping control over the militias. That is not the responsibility of the police. The police of course have got responsibility to maintain security.

So it becomes an argument between the police and the military, and this is taking place of course in Maliana, where we know there was a fight between the police and the military. The situation is one that the UN itself is monitoring the need to upgrade its security force. It is one I think where decisions will have to be made and the bullet bitten during the registration process, and if the ballot is delayed because of lack of security, it will in a sense have to enforce the status of the upgrade. The upgrade will be enforced on the basis of the agreement that was signed under the eye of General Wiranto and the two bishops in Dili between the representatives of the resistance, the militias and the military.

So in fact you do have a signed agreement that says there is a peace there. So what the UN can do is send in peacekeepers to enforce that particular peace, even though we do not place a lot of trust in that particular document. The document exists and there is one to be enforced.

CHAIR—We are really running out of time and we have to consider that we will have witnesses during the afternoon, but there is just one question I would like to pose. Let us assume that there is a result in the August ballot and the August ballot is for independence. Let us say that the numbers are 60-40. Obviously those 40 per cent who do not support independence, for whatever reasons, are still going to remain on the island. What sort of transitional arrangements to full independence are necessary to ensure that those who are currently the minority and are having violence perpetrated upon them by the Indonesians do not become the perpetrators of violence in a supposedly independent state by seeking revenge on those who have sided with the Indonesians, for whatever reasons; whether they are good or bad?

In other words, what I am saying is: how do we guarantee that into the future we do not have, instead of one minority fighting the might of the Indonesian forces, another group put in their place, and another minority then fighting, so that we do not have a peaceful transition and we end up with a civil war but from the reverse perspective? How do we ensure that this does not happen?

Mr Alcock—One of the things we have continually called for, Senator, is that there be a credible peacemaking force or the police force there well after the ballot to ensure that there is security.

CHAIR—How long would you see this needing to take place?

Mr Alcock—It might need to stay there for some time.

CHAIR—Do you think it is a matter of years?

Mr Alcock—It could be at least a year.

Dr Parsons—After the meeting with the resistance leaders that will take place in Jakarta between Xanana Gusmao and Ramos Horta and other resistance leaders of CNRT, they talked about a government of national unity being formed if the ballot for autonomy was rejected, and Ramos Horta was talking of three years in which representatives from the militia and themselves would be involved in that parliament, although he did say that there would be representatives of the militia who were carrying out the best interests of the people of East Timor.

CHAIR—I am just trying to work out the process, and I am sorry to interrupt you here. Let us assume that independence is voted for and is accepted. Do you see the need for a UN peacekeeping force—not a peacemaking but a peacekeeping force—of some nature to oversee transitional arrangements for a period of, let us say, three years? Then at the end of that three-year period do you need some sort of further test to say that the peacekeeping force could be withdrawn, such that there is now a reasonable transitional arrangement in place that will see no further bloodshed? I am just trying to get some sort of picture as to where you see things heading, such that we can have some idea of what we need to commit as a nation.

Senator WEST—How do you stop another Cyprus situation?

Ms Tonkin—The agreement under which the consultation is going to take place does make allowance or provide for a United Nations force to stay in East Timor after the ballot to provide a transitional period. It also makes provision for some sort of transitional government to take place, a representative transitional council composed of no more than 25 people, etcetera, appointed by the United Nations Secretary-General. So there is that provision for a transitional period under the auspices of the United Nations. Obviously the United Nations would have to stay in there for some considerable time—hopefully not as long as Cyprus but I do not think anybody can really foretell that.

Once the Indonesian military has withdrawn, I think the militia will not be anywhere near such a dangerous force because they are at present under the protection, as we know, of the Indonesian military, but I do think there will also have to be some accounting for actual crimes. That is just my personal opinion, it is not one we have discussed, I am afraid, but I should think there would have to be some accounting for crimes where people can be proved to have committed murders and other atrocities. There should be some sort of court set up to call those people to account. When that is dealt with and the militias are disarmed and the Indonesian military gone, there is much more chance of a peaceful solution to the whole problem.

Mr Alcock—With respect to the 60-40 prediction, the Timorese say it is more like 98 per cent to two per cent. I am not sure if it is as good as that either, but the fact is we should be aware that it is the militias that have threatened violence against pro-independence

supporters afterwards if the autonomy vote does not succeed. They are the ones that seem to be the most visible on the ground in Timor at present. I think most of the threatened violence actually does come from the pro-Indonesian camp, not from the pro-independence camp. I think it is important to make that clear.

CHAIR—I am just trying to look at the outcomes that may be facing us somewhere down the track and what we may well need to do as a response: what sort of assistance we may well need to give; what sort of aid we may well need to commit. This is one issue that we have not even canvassed with your group here today.

Dr Parsons—Yes, I think we would have to get into some of the issues underlying the popular support for the militia in certain areas. For example, the fact that theological struggles can be overlaid on land disputes, particularly in the south-west. I know in the Suai area that is a problem. As I said, under George Aditjondro's study, 40 per cent of this land has already been alienated and it is under the control of the Suharto family. That includes local Timorese agents of Suharto; that includes the governor and Basilio dos Reis Araujo, both working for the Suharto family interests. So one would have to look at poverty alleviation and land dispute and conflict resolution as some of the activities that the Australia could assist with as part of its aid package.

CHAIR—Could I just pose this last question? I am sorry but I am going to have to cut us off then. Putting to one side the past, could you see that there is an honourable path by which retreat could be made available for Indonesia out of East Timor? Forgetting the atrocities and everything else, if there is not a path by which face can be saved then retreat is difficult indeed. What is the path which gives honour to the East Timorese—and if you accept the harassment, the murder, the rape, the pillage and everything else of East Timor; not trying to get into the issue of whether it should be independent or not, but if you accept that—so that you accept that you have got to give the East Timorese the right to save face, as well as the Indonesians? How does one accommodate that in this very difficult set of circumstances?

Mr Moniz—Those Timorese—I am a victim myself. I would say that, with respect to saving face, we are prepared to take any agreement that comes along, as long as Indonesia respects the same thing, because throughout our history we are a very honourable people. We can stand up to our words if that is what the Indonesians or the international community can say, but we are prepared to accept that. If Indonesia actually respects the principle of human dignity, that is all we can ask. Give us the chance, we can talk about it. Actually, of most importance is the fact that the international community needs to take a more harsh approach to Indonesia, to recognise the sovereignty of East Timor. We can be part of society. We can produce the capability of looking after ourselves and collaborating for the world process.

CHAIR—I have been talking to the secretary and I think we really need to stop.

Mr Moniz—Sure.

CHAIR—As much as I would like to proceed, we do have other witnesses this afternoon and we do have a commitment to get to Perth by tonight for a hearing in Perth tomorrow. I

thank you for your appearance here today. I thank you for the evidence you presented to us, and undoubtedly that will be taken into consideration when we draft our report.

Proceedings suspended from 12.58 p.m. to 1.30 p.m.

HUGO, Professor Graeme John (Private capacity)

CHAIR—I welcome Professor Graeme Hugo, professor of geography, University of Adelaide, to this hearing. The committee prefers all evidence to be given in public, but should you at any stage wish to give any part of your evidence in private you may ask to do so. I now invite you to make a statement and then we will proceed to questions.

Prof. Hugo—Thank you. I am professor of geography at the University of Adelaide, but I am appearing at this hearing in a private capacity. I will be mainly addressing two of the terms of reference of the inquiry; firstly, that concerning the economic and social conditions in East Timor and, to some extent, it will impinge on that relating to development assistance needs in East Timor. I apologise that there is no written statement, but I have been overseas for the last three weeks so it is only what I could prepare on the weekend. I will say a word or two about where I am coming from in my evidence. My main experience is in other parts of eastern Indonesia. I have worked extensively in East Nusa Tenggara and in the other part of Timor. I have, for example, prepared a report on the human resource situation in the neighbouring province which was for the national planning agency in Indonesia. I have also done a lot of work for the International Labour Organisation, firstly on human resource development in regional areas and, secondly, on migration and how migration has impinged on development in these areas.

What I would be suggesting is that the human resource situation in Timor as it is today is one which is impeding development, as well as of course the political situation. If East Timor were to gain independence immediately, the human resource situation would be a major impeding factor to improving the social and economic conditions of the population quickly. If there was some forward planning to be done, one would hope that Australia would move very quickly in these areas of human resource development within the province because I would see them as being a major element in the underdevelopment of the province. I will not be addressing the political situation or the political conditions. My main level of expertise is as a demographer and a geographer who has worked in similar areas and I guess is very familiar with the sorts of statistical resources which are available for us to make an assessment of what the social and economic situation, the demographic situation, is in Timor.

I have tried to outline on this overhead what I am going to be talking about today. I will not have time, obviously, to talk about all of these things in any great depth, but I want to say something about population and existing fertility and mortality trends; population distribution and migration and changing population composition; and, particularly, the human resource situation with respect to poverty, health, education and the work force as far as they are reflected in the official data sources.

Before beginning, I think it is necessary for me to list some of the resources which are available to us in terms of what we can glean from the Indonesian data sources about the current population and the social and economic situation within East Timor. The main sources that I have depended upon are the 1980 and 1990 population censuses within the province, the SUPAS which is the intercensal survey undertaken in 1995, the SUSENAS which is the socioeconomic survey undertaken by the Bureau of Statistics—the most recent one was 1997—and the SAKERNAS which is the national labour force survey which gets undertaken each year and for which the most recent data relates to 1997 and 1998.

So the material is relatively up to date, even in fact post-dating the economic crisis in Indonesia in the case of the last source. We have to be very questioning about the quality of the data, firstly, because of the political situation—the extent to which data that is collected is representative. I have faith in the fact that it is not doctored information at the stage of the Bureau of Statistics getting hold of the information. I think one could question whether it is totally representative of the populations right across East Timor. One point which I would make is that there is a lot of information there which could be analysed in much greater detail than I have had a chance to do on the weekend, using material which I have collected over a period of time. I might also add that one of my former students has just been made head of the Bureau of Statistics in Dili, so I have got reasonable access to that information.

First of all, on the population of East Timor, this is obviously a very sensitive area. The existing population measured in 1994 was 839,710, which is as you can see less than one per cent of the Indonesian population. However, it has been growing significantly faster than the total Indonesian population, something I will comment on in a moment. One of the big issues about the past in East Timor is mortality and the extent to which there has been undoubtedly very substantial mortality. I believe, at least with the existing information we have, that it is virtually impossible to calculate demographically what the loss of life, other than by natural causes, has been.

If we were to have some accurate population information from the pre-Indonesian period, if there were in the Portuguese records an age-sex distribution of the population from the 1970s, it would give us the possibility of making some quite accurate estimates, I would say, of the extent of that undoubtedly significant loss of life in the process of Indonesia taking over and running East Timor. If we look at the official statistics on mortality, what we see is that the life expectancy at birth in East Timor is lower than elsewhere in Indonesia. You can see there that the latest figures for 1996 put the life expectancy at birth in East Timor at 59 for males and 62 for females, in each case about five years lower than the Indonesian average.

The 1997 infant mortality figures which I have included I am, quite frankly, very sceptical about. I would be very surprised if infant mortality rates in East Timor are below the national average, as is indicated in those 1997 demographic and health survey statistics. They are based on a very small sample and I think the earlier statistics are probably more indicative. We are probably still looking at a situation where about 10 out of every 100 babies that are born die before they reach their first birthday, which really does, I think, indicate a very poor situation. I might add that this is a situation outside of the political situation. This is really an indication of very low levels of living among the people in the area.

With respect to fertility, it is clear that the level of fertility in East Timor is substantially higher than the national average. You can see there that in 1997 the figures are 4.4. Roughly translated, when women finish their child-bearing they will have on average about 4½ children, whereas the comparable figures in Indonesia at that time are 2.7. So the family planning program has had much more of an impact elsewhere in the archipelago than it has in East Timor. When we look at the proportion of women using family planning, it is lower in East Timor than it is in any other province of Indonesia. This high fertility is obviously one of the major factors in the very rapid population growth which is occurring. One can

speculate on the reasons for the high fertility, but certainly we often find in populations which have experienced very high mortality in the past that there is a fertility response to that high mortality, and this may be an element in this situation.

With respect to population distribution, the population is not distributed evenly throughout East Timor. On a map of the level of distribution, you can see that the concentration in and around Dili is significant. If we look at proportions living in urban areas, the proportions in East Timor are lower than any of the other 26 provinces in Indonesia. Only about 10 per cent of the population were classified as urban at the 1995 intercensal survey, so it is still very much a dispersed rural population despite development activities which have occurred in recent times.

Population movement is fundamental and important to the whole province. Probably very important is the outflow of refugees from East Timor. I have not been able to collect the full figures on the number of East Timorese born people in overseas destinations so I took out, just for the two years, where we got the data in the Australian census. At the last census in 1996, but also in 1991, the East Timorese were included by the Australian census officials within the Indonesian population, but we did have separate figures for 1981 and 1986. Of that population over 90 per cent lived in Sydney, Melbourne or Darwin in the Northern Territory, so they are a very concentrated population. I think one has to ask the question: on achieving independence, is that the extent to which there would be a flow back of emigres, of people who have left East Timor, and the extent to which there would be skilled people particularly going back and contributing to the development of the economy?

One of the arguments I would have later is that, if we look at the current population with high levels of education and so on, a very significant proportion of these are immigrants from other parts of Indonesia who could be expected to leave if there was an achievement of independence. One could see a real gap, at least in the short term, of people involved in senior positions in the bureaucracy and in the private sector to some degree. I think the extent to which that would be counterbalanced by some backflow of qualified people from places like Australia probably needs greater attention, but I do not have any handle on what proportion of people would be willing to go back on the achievement of independence.

Internal migration within Indonesia has been very significant. There has been some movement in response to the difficult peace and order situation. When I was in Kupang last year, for example, there was a significant movement, particularly of Chinese business people, into Kupang temporarily because it was the anniversary of one of the major dates in Indonesian occupation of East Timor and there was a degree of people who were scared and so there were very significant numbers who had moved out.

The official data which we have relates to migration between the provinces in Indonesia. What I have done this morning is to try to map the major flows. While I have the actual information I will just indicate what the major flows have been. The largest flow of population into East Timor has been from neighbouring NTT, East Nusa Tenggara Timor which is the neighbouring province. The bulk of that movement has been from the part of Timor which is in the province of NTT, East Nusa Tenggara Timor. This partly reflects the similar ethnicity of people across the border and there is a lot of movement to and fro

between the various parts of Timor and a lot of fraternal feeling among the people on the Indonesian side of the border. That is reflected in this large amount of flow.

I would like to draw attention to two other flows. There are very significant flows from Java. This does tend to reflect very largely people transferred by government from Java into positions within the bureaucracy in East Timor. Many of these positions are held by people who originate in Java. Unfortunately the army are not included in the census so we have no idea—of course the army would be another major group represented, and I stress that they are not included in those statistics.

The other significant movement I think you need to take account of is the one from South Sulawesi, the former Celebes. This movement is common to all of eastern Indonesia. It involves the movement of the so-called BBM—Bugis Butonese and Makasserese—people from South Sulawesi who have moved not just into East Timor but also into Irian, into other parts of Nusa Tenggara, into Ambon and into the rest of Maluku. This group have tended to be involved in the private sector and have taken advantage of the very significant government investment of funds in both Irian and East Timor. The benefits of a lot of the investment have not reached the local people in both cases. The BBM issue is something which people talk about in the region. You may have noticed that when there were the difficulties in Ambon last year it was the BBM, the Islamic people from South Sulawesi, who ended up leaving temporarily from the area when there were anti-Muslim riots in a Christian majority situation.

These groups I think are fairly significant. You could probably recognise the indigenous population, or the local population made up mainly of Timorese. You have the Javanese and Sundanese—the groups from Java which are mainly associated with the administration. You have the South Sulawesi people who have come in and have tended to dominate a lot of the trading activity in the towns and so on. You also have the Chinese population and, although we do not know the actual numbers that are involved, we know the number of people who have Chinese citizenship which would be only a relatively small proportion of the Chinese population because many of them will have had Indonesian citizenship. As you can see, 91 per cent of the population are Catholic, representing the local population. A very large proportion of the Islamic group are the migrants who have come in. Turning to the Chinese population, you can see that of the 747,000 people in 1990, 5,500 had Chinese citizenship. That is obviously reflective of a significant local Chinese population.

CHAIR—Is there a marked ethnic difference between those in East Timor and West Timor?

Prof. Hugo—There is a lot of similarity. The differences are not so much ethnic in that people would all regard themselves as being Timorese, apart from those who have migrated from other islands like Rote or whatever, but there is a difference in religion in that the bulk of the Timorese on the Dutch side, where the Dutch were most influential, tend to be Protestant whereas this group tend to be Catholic. That is a not insignificant difference, I guess.

In terms of ethnicity as culturally defined, the main difference would be religion. There also is, I guess, the intermarrying of the Portuguese population, to some extent, with the

population in East Timor, but there is a lot of similarity. I have often had it said to me in villages in Timor that there is a feeling of fraternal linkages with East Timor, so there are connections, despite the long period of separateness during the colonial period.

CHAIR—So migration is accepted relatively easily therefore from west to east?

Prof. Hugo—And to some extent there are family connections across borders still as well. The figure that I showed on the diagram showed that most of the migration was actually occurring across those directions. One of the things I did not mention is that the census shows mostly in-migration and not so much out-migration. There has not been a great deal of migration of East Timorese people to other parts of Indonesia, except for into other parts of Timor. But the main migration of them has been out of the country in terms of the emigre and refugee population.

CHAIR—What would be the reason for that, that there is not much in the way of out-migration? Is it that there is a restriction on movement?

Prof. Hugo—Not so much. It is probably a continuation of separateness, I guess. I would add another factor—which I am going to get on to—in terms of the educational levels and access to opportunities within East Timor. The local people would find it difficult in many cases to compete in labour markets elsewhere in Indonesia. Again, this is to some extent speculative in that we really have not had the opportunity to go in there and do the surveys which would allow us to be more definitive about it.

It is interesting to look at language because the proportion of the population who speak only Bahasa Indonesia—the Indonesian lingua franca—at home is very small, seven per cent. If we look at the rest, 47 per cent are able to speak Bahasa Indonesia but do not speak Bahasa Indonesia at home, they speak Timorese, in most cases. Forty five per cent cannot speak Indonesian at all and that is despite substantial efforts by the Indonesians to ensure that became the lingua franca within the province.

I will briefly address age structure, which is significant in terms of future development. The pyramid I am addressing shows the age structure in 1990. Each of the layers represents the number of people in different age groups, starting at nought to four, then going to five to nine and so on. A couple of things you notice with this is that, firstly, there is a very flat layer at the bottom of the age pyramid, very large numbers in the nought to four and five to nine age groups.

Senator WEST—What has happened to the 10 to 14s?

Prof. Hugo—This is one of the pieces of evidence which one could produce to suggest high levels of mortality. Looking at Indonesia as a whole, this tends to be the age group for which under-enumeration is highest because they are the most mobile age group, and they tend to be away on the night of the census and so on. However, it would seem that that is excessively high and so it may well be that there has been a significant mortality effect on that age group.

Senator WEST—You would even expect 15 to 19 and 20 to 24 to be higher than they are, because you have those four there together that are almost the same. You normally get a bit of a distribution curve on that, do you not?

Prof. Hugo—You would if there were an even pattern of fertility.

Senator WEST—All things being equal.

Prof. Hugo—I agree with you, but the only thing I would add is that, if we look at all age pyramids in Indonesia, there does tend to be that bit of erosion there because they are the most mobile age groups and most difficult to find on the night of the census. I think there is certainly some evidence there that high mortality would be a significant factor in that.

What I have done there is take out some significant age groups and show what proportion they are of the population. You can see that in East Timor the nought to four age group made up 18 per cent of the total population in 1990, compared to only 11.7 per cent in Indonesia and 7.5 per cent in Australia. The point I am making here is that in terms of future development this represents a huge challenge because you have this big layer of people coming into the school age groups, coming into education—much higher than you have in virtually any other area—at a time of great disruption and a time of lack of availability of services.

If we are going to get independence within a short period of time, the need of this group is absolutely crucial because they are going to be the future leaders of the new nation, if it is to come about. That is particularly so when you look at this in conjunction with some of the things I am going to say about education in a moment. So there is an enormous challenge there in terms of maternal and child health care, education, and providing jobs for youth.

CHAIR—Is there any direct relationship between the fact that the population is so heavily Catholic in East Timor and the high proportion of young people?

Prof. Hugo—This is an interesting question, because in other parts of Indonesia that are Catholic there has been a significant decline of fertility, and that could be partly associated with Catholicism. If you look at the Philippines, the decline in fertility has been slow and that is partly due to the impact of Catholicism. Certainly Catholicism would be one of the elements in it, but fertility still is extremely high.

CHAIR—So one would expect the demand to be there in the future, though?

Prof. Hugo—Yes. The point I am making is that the need is not just in the future, the need is now, and the need will be immediate when or if there is independence achieved. The Indonesian government has ploughed a lot of money into resources for the province but, if we look at any of the major indicators of poverty, East Timor comes out at the bottom of the list—at No. 27—in all of the indicators by province. I have taken a few out for 1990 and 1995. If you look at percentage of the population that die before they reach the age of 40, you can see that it is significantly higher in East Timor than it is in Indonesia as a whole. Illiteracy is massive, by far the highest rates in Indonesia.

The per cent with access to clean water is about the national average. There has obviously been quite a bit of activity within East Timor but there is still more difficulty in getting to medical facilities and there are higher proportions of infants with low levels of nutrition. So even in the basic variables for which the Indonesian government collects statistics East Timor tends to come out at or near the bottom in every indicator that ones likes to raise. The only one which competes tends to be West Nusa Tenggara, which is relatively close by.

I have said a few things about education. To me, human resource development is a fundamental element of any sort of economic and social development. If East Timor is to gain independence, a concerted effort in the area of human resource development is needed. There will be a need for assistance in that and I hope Australia would be heavily involved in that. We have talked about the heavy rates of illiteracy. If we look at the distribution by age, this is one of the things that I find fairly concerning. If we look at Indonesia as a whole, the vast bulk of illiteracy is concentrated in the older ages. You will see that the incidence of illiteracy is much higher among the older age groups. But we are still looking at a fifth to a quarter of young adults being illiterate. That is four or five times—probably more—than it is in the rest of Indonesia. So it means that the proportion of the population getting access to reasonable education is still limited, despite the increase in availability of education facilities.

CHAIR—When you talk about access to education, it is not simply a matter of teachers, is it? Can you clearly identify where the gaps are? Is it a matter of schools or is it a matter of resources?

Prof. Hugo—You would need on the ground experience. That is obviously one factor. I will put up a slide in a moment which shows how the availability has tended to increase in terms of facilities. But, clearly, the disrupted peace and order situation has to have an influence on this. The other thing is that it is obvious that the provision of schools during the colonial period was disgraceful. It was extremely limited and we are starting from a very low base. Making that change to making education universally available for all children is a huge challenge when you are coming from a base where a very tiny proportion must have got to school during the Portuguese period.

So, to me, it is the three things: it is partly investment and facilities; it is partly the disrupted peace and order situation; and, it is partly the cultural thing of establishing the idea that education is important within a society. I was shocked when I saw the illiteracy statistics and also the schooling statistics.

Senator WEST—There is a difference between illiteracy and literacy but there are also variations in literacy.

Prof. Hugo—On average—and, remember, that is including a lot of in-migrants who come in with higher levels—what this shows is the proportion that have never been to school and, to me, that is incredibly high, particularly when you compare it to the total of Indonesia. Indonesia has an older population. In Indonesia these days they include, for their statistics, those who have not completed primary school with those who have never been to school. You can see that that is about a third, but we are looking at two-thirds for East Timor. It is extremely high. Again I stress that, in order to improve the wellbeing of the

population in East Timor and to lay the basis for a significant improvement in the situation, education has to be a huge priority.

I could go on about education but I will not. Let me give you some idea of the changes which have occurred. These are official Indonesian statistics, and unfortunately they are not up to date because I could not lay my hands on more up-to-date statistics, but you can see the increase in the numbers of schools. That is just quantity and one cannot read anything into that in terms of quality and so on. I am just making the point that there was nothing much there to begin with, with what the Portuguese provided. It was scandalously low in terms of provision of services, and is still not good.

Senator WEST—Who would be providing those schools? Are they mainly state run or Catholic?

Prof. Hugo—These would be virtually all state run schools. There was one other thing which I thought I would put up, which is actually an official Indonesian government publication. It has a breakdown of males and females, and these are the averages of the proportion of children aged seven to 18 who are in school. East Timor is just way off the clock in terms of the very low proportions of those aged seven to 18 going to school. It is two things: it is partly that you have the residual effect of poor education provision over a long period of time, but even now, today, the actual numbers going to school are very low, without even going into the quality of education services that have been provided.

Just briefly on the economy and the work force, if we look at the Indonesian economy, despite the Indonesian government's indication of its investment into the province, we will see that the RGDP (regional gross domestic product) per capita here, as officially identified, is significantly lower than that nationally—about 849,000 rupiahs compared to 2½ million rupiahs nationwide. So the overall economic level is substantially lower. Up until the crisis time, at least the economy was growing faster in East Timor than it was on average in Indonesia, but it is coming from a very low level.

One of the things about the economy which is very important is the dominance of agriculture. This is the structure of the economy. You can see there that about 40 per cent of the wealth generated in the province comes from agriculture compared to only a fifth of that in Indonesia as a whole. You can see substantial proportions coming under the headings of 'Construction' and 'Government', which are obviously part of the involvement of the Indonesian government in construction development. There has obviously been a significant injection in those areas. But there is still very little in the areas of industry and services. So the economy is absolutely dominated by agriculture. If we look at the proportions of the work force and areas they work, we will see that agriculture again tends to dominate, with 71 per cent of the workers involved in agriculture, compared to 45 per cent in Indonesia as a whole.

So you have not got very much variation in the economy. The vast bulk of job opportunities are really in agriculture. I would add, too, that a lot of the opportunities that have been created in the tertiary sector, in the informal sector particularly, have been taken up by the migrants coming in, particularly those from South Sulawesi. There are very high proportions of the work force who work in the unorganised, informal sector. Despite the very

significant government presence, you can see here that only less than one-quarter of the male population and less than 10 per cent of female workers are involved in formal sector activities, and the vast bulk of them are in the informal sector.

You will notice that there are relatively low levels of unemployment, but unemployment in this context—as it is right throughout Indonesia—is not really an indicator of poverty, because in Indonesia to be unemployed you have to be wealthy, because if you are not employed you have to undertake any sort of work, regardless of how low it is in productivity, how low it is in status, how many hours you have to put in. So if it is scavenging or something like that, you just have to do some work. So the unemployed people tend to be those who can afford to be unemployed. So you cannot interpret unemployment levels in Indonesia in the same way as you do in Australia where it is very much associated with poverty.

Senator WEST—What would comprise the informal sector?

Prof. Hugo—The informal sector is the group who do not receive a regular wage, that either work for themselves, probably do not pay tax, part of the system which is usually a family based type of employment, lack of security of employment, small scale—that type of thing.

Senator WEST—How do you tie that in with the percentage working less than 35 hours, because in the female sector there you have got nearly 30 per cent working less. Whilst 91 per cent are working in the informal sector, 71 per cent are working less than 35 hours. Are they different sets of figures based on different things or can we measure apples with apples there?

Prof. Hugo—I do not see that as being incompatible at all. All that is saying is those people are working both in the informal and formal sector.

Senator WEST—Different hours.

Prof. Hugo—Yes. That percentage working less than 35 hours is really a good indicator of underemployment. It is indicating that people who may want to work longer and more productively just do not have the work available to them. In the case of women there are probably more voluntary underemployed than involuntary underemployed, but I think we tend to overestimate the numbers that are voluntarily underemployed.

Senator WEST—If you have got 4½ kids, to actually be working full time would be—and there is presumably limited access to child care. There would be none of those sorts of things.

Prof. Hugo—In most of these situations it tends to be family based, an intergenerational situation where the older people take care of the children. No, certainly that is the case. But even in the case of men you have still got 45 per cent of them who are not working over 35 hours a week. As in the rest of Indonesia you have a very significant underemployment problem. I would argue that it is underemployment, not unemployment which is the problem. It is more of a problem in East Timor than it is in the other 26 provinces.

Just running through some of the health characteristics—access to health facilities, access to clean water and so on—I guess it all tells the same story of a population that is pretty badly off. Anaemia, nutrition, all of these sorts of health indicators indicate a situation of relatively low wellbeing.

CHAIR—Can I just stop you there? If you say all of these things are indicators that are well accepted, well known, what is the Indonesian response to these things, given that they currently see it as their province—they see it as part of Indonesia—and they come across, obviously, statistics from their own bureau of statistics? Do they have a view as to either satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the level of literacy, the level of health care, whatever it might be, given that there is the dislocation within Timor itself in terms of population?

Prof. Hugo—How this is usually expressed is not so much in relation to East Timor but in relation to Eastern Indonesia all told. If you take the whole lot of Eastern Indonesia, they do tend to be the worst off provinces. They tend to be the provinces which come out lowest on all of these types of indicators, and they tend to be the provinces which are furthest away from Jakarta. They get less attention from Jakarta. They get less investment per capita, both from the private sector and from the public sector.

I am really not aware of how the government actually perceives these statistics. There have been specific attempts to improve the social and economic conditions of people in Eastern Indonesia. I have not seen anything in the way of official government discussions of the wellbeing of people in East Timor, but there is a lot of discussion about Eastern Indonesia as a whole.

Senator WEST—You have got figures on infant mortality and that break-up. Do you have any idea of what the maternal mortality rate is? Given that you have got a calorie consumption averaging 1,800 calories which is not high, you have got an anaemia rate—mind you it is lower in East Timor than most of Indonesia—of 48 per cent and a medical officer present at the birth of less than 18 per cent, do we have any idea of what the maternal mortality rate is?

Prof. Hugo—I can find out the maternal mortality because we do have maternal mortality data from the demographic and health survey. Unfortunately, in many of these things the numbers actually interviewed and studied in East Timor is very low because it tends to be related to the total population. For example, in the SUSENAS, overall there were I think about half a million households across all of Indonesia interviewed. What this would boil down to is a relatively small number in East Timor.

Senator WEST—It would skew any figures.

Prof. Hugo—Yes. To me, these statistics tell a consistent story, so they are indicative. But really to fully understand the real situation of people on the ground and how it varies and so on, that can only be done through detailed study on the ground and detailed talking to people who live and work in that province. But there is a very consistent story which comes out of the data that is available which can be used as a direction for suggesting where major inputs have to come from.

I make the point too about health services that we are talking in terms of quantity and, again, this is in Indonesia. Rumah sakit is hospital and the puskesmas are the local health centres set up by government. They are the fundamental arm of the Indonesia medical system. There are a number of doctors and a number of paramedical staff. You can see there has been a significant increase quantitatively in the availability of these services and, again, coming from a very low base. If you look back at 1981, the numbers are tiny.

Senator WEST—The Portuguese did not leave much, did they?

Prof. Hugo—No, they certainly did not. But one could make the equivalent comparison of the Dutch when they left in 1945—there was very little that was being built on. I have a couple of other things which I thought were quite interesting. The mass media has less influence in East Timor because the proportion with access to mass media is significantly less in East Timor than in Indonesia. I am always amazed by this 70 per cent of people in Indonesia who regularly watch television so you can see that has a massive impact. It is only 21 per cent in East Timor, so the penetration of mass media is much less in East Timor than it is elsewhere. I have a number of other statistics about housing which indicate relatively low levels of housing conditions as well.

In conclusion, I think all of this information is fairly superficial in that I have not had a massive amount of time to analyse the data but on the other hand I point out that I have spent a lot of time working on similar data in the neighbouring province so I think I can get a fairly quick handle on the information. All of these indicators point to a situation of low social and economic wellbeing, which is quite apart from the political disruption that is occurring there. This is likely to worsen in the immediate case of independence being achieved because one would see a lot of the people involved in administration, in education, in health facilities, and so on, moving out. To some extent that has to be weighed against emigres coming back.

The bottom line to me is that there is a pressing need for development assistance in the whole area of human resource development and human wellbeing. It would seem to me to be a major priority in any development assistance that Australia would contemplate being involved in on the achievement of independence.

CHAIR—Thank you. Who would be best to coordinate that assistance—private organisations, NGOs or government? It is a major question and you can get a lot of good people all falling over each other in the rush to do the right thing.

Prof. Hugo—I think it would be a combination of both, because what needs to be undertaken is basically the redevelopment of the human resources situation. It would be no good to say everything should be done by NGOs because one would have to be sitting at an education structure or a health structure or whatever and persisting through time. While the immediate needs might be best met by the NGOs, if a nation-building exercise were to be undertaken, it would be very important to assist in the establishment of those structures as well. I do not think one could come down directly on one or the other, I think both would be needed.

CHAIR—Do you have any questions?

Senator WEST—I do not think so. That was most illuminating.

CHAIR—Seeing you are in geography and demography, do you know anything about the internal holdings within East Timor itself by Indonesia? We have had it said this morning that 40 per cent of the land is owned by the Suharto family. I do not know if that is an accurate or inaccurate figure. It has also been said in submissions to us that one of the reasons that Indonesia tenaciously holds on to East Timor is for the money and income that is generated to those who have received privileged positions from either within the Indonesian bureaucracy or Indonesian military by their positions from within East Timor.

It would seem, based on what you tell us there, that—and this is another thing that has been said—the amount of income generated within those positions really is not of any great significance in terms of their overall holdings in other parts of Indonesia or outside of Indonesia. Do you have any comment on that?

Prof. Hugo—I do not have any information about who owns what in East Timor. But, observing the whole of the East Indonesia situation, there are a lot of similarities that can be drawn between Irian Jaya and East Timor, and one of them is, at least on the surface, there have been some pretty substantial financial investments of the government in those two provinces. I do not know the extent to which those figures can be believed but they must generate income earning opportunities in both of those provinces. For example, if you are establishing the number of school buildings I just mentioned that creates a significant demand for building activity. If you are doing all of those types of activities that creates a certain amount of demand in the local economy.

What would appear to be the case is that the local people are not getting a full flow-on of that investment. If we look at all of those indicators which we have looked at—and admittedly it is coming from an extremely low level to begin with—we are looking at a province which is at the bottom on virtually all of these indicators, despite very substantial investments. I think if you add that together with substantial in-migration of not just Javanese and senior military people, or whatever, but on a smaller scale level the BBM—the Bugis, Butonese, Makasserese groups—it is clear that they are taking advantage of a lot of the economic opportunities which have been created there. A lot of the economic opportunities being created are not going to the full benefit of the local people.

I do not think I could be any more exact than that. It would be people with different information and different experience from me who would know about the extent to which there has been taking up of land-holding by the Suharto family and so on. But there does seem to me to be a disjuncture between the massive amounts of investment which have gone on and the still relatively low levels of wellbeing of the bulk of the population.

CHAIR—Thank you for your submission to us this afternoon.

[2.45 p.m.]

da COSTA, Mr Helder, Director, Economy and Technology, East Timor Study Group

CHAIR—Welcome. Do you have any comments to make on the capacity in which you appear?

Mr da Costa—I am a PhD student in the School of Economics, University of Adelaide.

CHAIR—The committee prefers all evidence to be given in public but, should you at any stage wish to give any part of your evidence in private, you may ask to do so and the committee will consider your request. The committee has before it a written submission from you and a colleague.

Mr da Costa—Yes, Joao Mariano Saldanha.

CHAIR—Yes. Are there any alterations or additions that you would like to make to your submission at this stage?

Mr da Costa—No.

CHAIR—I now invite you to make an opening statement and then we will proceed to questions.

Mr da Costa—Firstly, allow me to thank you, Mr Chairman and honourable members of the Senate, for inviting the East Timor Study Group to present one of our policy oriented studies on economic viability of East Timor. I assume you all have the paper entitled *Economic viability of East Timor revisited: outlook for the 21st century*. This paper has been presented in three different forums. The first one we presented in the all-inclusive East Timorese dialogue in which I participated in 1997 and 1998 in Austria. The second part we presented to the American university in Washington DC where we held our first workshop of the East Timor Study Group. The third part we also presented in one of our workshop series in Canberra recently at the Australian National University, as well as at the East Timor Strategic Development Planning Conference in Melbourne in the first week of April.

CHAIR—Have we received all three?

Mr da Costa—I think this paper is being updated all the time. I am referring to the latest version.

CHAIR—Do we have the latest version?

Mr da Costa—Yes.

CHAIR—It is just that I have two parts to that.

Mr da Costa—Yes, the other one that I am about to read is mainly to summarise the main points of this paper.

CHAIR—Thank you.

Mr da Costa—You are welcome. This presentation is structured into three parts. First, I am going to give a brief introduction of the East Timor Study Group. The second part outlines development policies under the past two regimes, Portuguese and Indonesian. The third part, which is the most important for this afternoon's presentation, outlines some future scenarios and the implications for the economy of East Timor.

The East Timor Study Group was established in July 1997 by a group of East Timorese young intellectuals, most of whom were studying abroad doing their masters and PhDs. The objective is to conduct a multidisciplinary approach researching problems faced by East Timorese society. As an independent non-violent and academic group, the East Timor Study Group also provides space for discussion based on democratic principles and stimulates the growth of pluralistic ideas and the tradition of agreeing to disagree including, in the main, political discourse. We would also like to report that the ETSG is launching a series of studies in the forms of working papers. The *Economic viability of East Timor revisited*, which you have, is one in our series of presentations today.

East Timor faces many development challenges ahead. Of importance to our understanding of the present day economic character is its historical legacy. Development policies in the past were classified in our broad terms into four main periods. In the first period we classified them as the plantation economy which started from 1900 to 1960. These are mainly based on the exploitation of coffee and sandalwood, where the Portuguese colonisation started.

The second period we call the ethical economy period. This was started in 1960 to 1975, during which the Portuguese were driven by reform in Europe and also driven by a willingness to decolonise all the former Portuguese colonies. The Portuguese started to come up with its program, the so-called—in Portuguese language—plano de fomento or, in English, an equivalent of five-year development planning. During that time the economy of East Timor was starting to perform. In this paper you will see that we have data available there.

The third period we call the war economy from 1975 to 1980. We all know at that time it was the consequence of war where starvation, disease, famine and everything happened at that time. The fourth period I would name as uncertain development from 1980 until now. We are still at the crossroads at the moment. Despite a favourable physical environment and rich cultural traditions, including the extended family system, customary land ownership, natural beauty, forests, and all this good news, East Timor's development is constrained by the dispersal of the land mass, shortage of skilled labour, subsistence agriculture and poor infrastructure.

Social development structural indicators lag behind all other small Micronesian states and other former Portuguese colonies. The reason is that those countries are sovereign states whereas East Timor is very unlucky to have been colonised by the two regimes. Economic performances have been poor in recent years, especially during the Asian financial crisis, despite high growth rates between 1983 and 1995. At that time Indonesia came up with its program, the so-called Repelita. We have experienced three different Repelita between 1983

and 1995, but now we call it a period of adjustment because we are not sure which direction we are heading in. I would emphasise that the future economic development of East Timor depends on the long-awaited political settlement which we are now experiencing. Therefore, it is important to note the agreement signed by the Indonesian and Portuguese governments under the United Nations auspices.

We believe that any economic policy needs to take into account the outcome of this referendum, other things being equal. What we tried to do here was to get some economic policies according to two scenarios—that means autonomy or independence. Regardless of the outcome, let us begin with the autonomy. Very little will change with the current political states of East Timor if the East Timorese choose autonomy with Indonesia. The old regime will prevail. The main policies, especially political and fiscal policies, are in the hands of the Jakarta government. I presume, Chair and honourable members, you all have the constitutional framework for special autonomy for East Timor, the so-called SARET (special autonomous region for East Timor).

To me, as an East Timorese, I perceive that there are some plus and minus contexts in this autonomy package. The only problem is that the autonomy package has never been tested in the eyes of the East Timorese, let alone in other provinces of the Indonesian archipelago. Perhaps one of the positive aspects of the package is that East Timor will continue to get financial subsidy from Jakarta. However, this will not repeat the old ways under the Suharto dictatorship where financial allocation to East Timor was done in a less transparent way.

Nowadays in East Timor there is a joke that the first family of Suharto is now happening in East Timor; the Cendana connection is now happening in East Timor. We call it the Bairro Coqueiros connection; that means that the current Governor Abilio also has got some privilege of controlling the whole economy. Nowadays the three words that are very infamous in Indonesia—corruption, collusion and nepotism—are now prevailing in East Timor as well. We do not want East Timor's future economic policy to be dominated by these phenomena again. Much will depend on the so-called new government that is going to be formed in Jakarta. Whatever happens, the new government in Jakarta may have different views of autonomy for East Timor itself.

Having said this, I now turn to the second option, which is independence. This brings us to the discussion of the economic viability of an independent East Timor. Discussions so far on the economy tend to view East Timor as not a viable entity, let alone economically. We would like to state at the outset that there is no clear definition of economic viability, let alone in this globalised world where almost all measurements are relative. We believe that the viable economy is a state in which it is able to attain certain objectives of growth and development while retaining control of its own economy.

Yes, East Timor has been dependent on external resources, especially financial resources. Yes, East Timor has also been dependent on the import of consumption goods. Most of all the imported goods are coming from other islands of Java, Sumatra and elsewhere. Yes, East Timor is a less developed territory. But these advantages are not typical of East Timor. A number of countries, especially small countries in the Caribbean and the South Pacific, have

also had such experiences, but many of them emerged victorious in terms of economic performance.

Well-documented evidence has shown that small countries, presumably including East Timor, can be viable economically if they adopt good policies and adopt good institutions that enable the country to respond adequately, to shop in the international market while reaping the benefits of trade. While Timor has all the advantages of a small country—that is, flexibility to adjust to external shocks and specialise in a number of industries according to its comparative advantages, such as tourism, coffee, sugar and home industries.

Having said this, we believe that the East Timorese can develop a viable and diversified economy by introducing good policies and developing a good institutional system capable of managing the country democratically. The core issue here is human resources, which can undermine the effort towards democratisation and the economic viability of East Timor. In other words, human resource development is a must for the East Timorese.

The next priority in our view is to develop an efficient bureaucracy within the culture of a competitive, democratic system, where the public is involved in major decision making processes while at the same time providing social control for political dictators and corrupt individuals in public life. In terms of revenue, whether it is in the long term or in the mid term, we believe and we have argued that East Timor can raise its revenue from six potential sources that we identify as follows.

Firstly, there is the share of exploration of natural resources. Potential revenues from oil and gas in the long term can be expected. We believe that the East Timor Gap Treaty should be renegotiated giving the East Timorese a legitimate chance to share the profit of the oil exploration within its own jurisdiction. The second potential source of revenue is income and property taxes. Despite the fact the East Timorese have low incomes and poor property ownership, thus providing a poor tax base, one of the internal revenues is income and property taxes and without that I am sure that any government that might emerge will have a headache.

The third source is export of agricultural products. As we know, traditionally East Timor exports coffee. Sandalwood now has disappeared, but slowly it will return again. There are also other potential commodities for export, such as coconut, livestock and other agriculture which East Timor has.

The fourth source is tourism. Tourism is an important source of generating income. We have an international standard airport of Baucau, for example, which is now being used as a TNI air base in the eastern part, where I come from. This can be renegotiated. We can invite capital investors to come to invest their money there so that we can reopen the international airport for potential visitors to East Timor. Also East Timor has a lot to offer, especially clean beaches, mountains and cultural traditions as attractions to the territory.

The fifth source is remittance from abroad. We also realise that a lot of East Timorese are now living abroad, especially in Australia, Macao, Portugal and in Maputo. We can also expect a contribution from the ethnic East Timorese Chinese community, sending money to their children in school or whatever it is. That will be expected to be one of the sources of

revenue for East Timor. The sixth source is the profits of state owned enterprise and their privatisation, with their operations being subject to the government of the day when it emerges.

The next crucial factor in our view is aid management. East Timor is dependent on external funding right through the medium term, as soon as East Timor's political solution is resolved. Core strategies may include developing an overall economic program for government, establishing a new currency, redirecting resources to give greater emphasis to meeting basic social needs. Designing the basic policies that the East Timorese need from the very beginning—let's say after the ballot, assuming that independence is won—is important, especially the political system and monetary, fiscal and trade policies. I am pleased to inform you, Chair and honourable members, that I have been invited to attend next week a World Bank training course for economic management for East Timor after the ballot.

In conclusion, the task of rebuilding the East Timorese economy in the post conflict era is enormous, especially with the decline of economic activity in recent times which is complicated by the trauma of war. Therefore, it is imperative to give priority to meeting basic needs—shelter, food and nutrition—as well as creating conditions of political stability and getting the economy moving. These essential demands will tend to absorb much of the international aid directed to East Timor in the next couple of months or years. All these strategies and policies must be conducted within an environment from the six points we have outlined above, of a comparative political system, democratic and efficient and less corrupt bureaucratic machinery. I hope you can ask me questions and we can develop discussion. Thank you.

CHAIR—Thank you, Mr da Costa. Let us assume that there is independence for East Timor. What, though, would be the level of independence—or interdependence, which would be a better way to describe it—upon the surrounding Indonesian provinces in terms of trade, either exporting produce from East Timor to those surrounding provinces or buying in from those provinces things that you would need? What is the level of interdependence between East Timor and the surrounding and existing Indonesia provinces? Would that be hurt by independence?

Mr da Costa—The level of dependency will be very high at the beginning of the transitional period. This is due to the fact that, even up to now, we rely heavily on foreign consumer goods which are really supplied by Java or other outer islands. But remember that East Timor also has a lot to offer, especially in primary resources and agricultural products. The only thing that we might rely on in the future is, for example, the consumer goods like petrol or salt or any other consumer goods. We are not talking about high level technology here; we are talking about the basic needs and necessities for the local people.

We have to be realistic: we still rely heavily on foreign supply and we understand that once this political situation is settled we can make some sort of arrangement with other provinces of Indonesia and also with other regions, for example, Australia or New Zealand or other South Pacific countries. We can also make some sort of trading arrangements so that we can export and import. In the global context, East Timor can also look beyond the regional integration process. We also can look, for example, to Europe or to other Portuguese

speaking countries so that we can expect some sort of supply to fulfil the gap that we might experience in the future.

Senator WEST—What sorts of consumer goods are you talking about?

Mr da Costa—Right now, for example, East Timor relies on nine basic commodities, for example, rice, petrol, salt, kerosene and that sort of stuff. The problem is that so far East Timor has not been able to develop properly because of the ongoing political instability, but East Timor one day will be able to develop and then we can gradually be released from this sort of dependency and we can survive on our own, based on East Timor's self-sufficient efforts.

CHAIR—You talk about renegotiating the Timor Gap Treaty. I understand that even if that were to be achieved the sort of income that would be generated, according to another submission we have, would be in the order of about \$US100 million per annum. I do not know if that figure is right or wrong, but that is the figure we have in another submission. That is about the amount that Indonesia has put into East Timor on an annual basis, yet there still has not been any economic success, given though that that has been at a time of political unrest, social dislocation and so on. Would you see there being sufficient income generated from oil and gas from the Timor Gap to sustain an independent East Timor economy?

Mr da Costa—That question is very challenging. I am a bit pessimistic on that point, given that we have oil and gas resources there but we are projecting it for the long-term development, not the short term. In the short term, what we can expect is foreign aid, for example, as well as other resources we can develop and can generate income from. But the number you are quoting is about right. For your information as well, Indonesia's annual budget for East Timor is about \$US100 million to \$US125 million per annum but that alone goes to the development of infrastructure and to pay the salaries and that sort of thing. Just to cover the salaries is already inclusive there. No-one knows at this point the projected income from oil and gas to go into East Timor's budget in the future. I am told there are a variety of figures coming from different sources. But we believe, if the income does come through to East Timor's budget in the future, we can categorically say that we can also rely on East Timor's exploration of oil and gas coming into East Timor's annual budget and that will itself contribute a major part of East Timor's development in the future.

I would like to also add that the Portuguese government has pledged to assist East Timor in the transitional process leading towards its independence. There was a joke in New York before the agreement came up: when the Indonesians showed them the figure of about \$US100 million per annum, the Portuguese took it lightly and said jokingly, 'That to us in Portugal is development for a district.' So regardless of whatever figures come up, we believe that East Timor's annual budget is about the same thing. It may happen in the future it may be higher than that because of the exchange rate and that sort of stuff, but I do believe—and I take your point—that we also have to rely in the long run on the oil and gas exploration, which will hopefully go to East Timor's coffers, provided that there is not much fluctuation of the oil prices in the international market.

CHAIR—You talk about the Timor Gap Treaty being renegotiated. On what basis would you see it being renegotiated? I am talking now in the broadest sense. As I understand it, it is an international treaty that has withstood challenges in the international courts. It is an international treaty between Indonesia and Australia. It gives varying degrees of shares of whatever the production is in zone A, zone B or the other zone. I have had a submission before the committee that says Indonesia should get a quarter, East Timor should get a quarter, and Australia should get a half. As I say, I am oversimplifying it, but do you have an oversimplified view, without getting into the machinations or the minutiae of the treaty? Could you give me what you see as being Indonesia's rightful part of the Timor Gap Treaty? What would be East Timor's rightful part—and, of course, Australia would get the balance?

Mr da Costa—To answer your question, it depends on the political situation of East Timor that might come up. If, for example, it comes to autonomy, then it depends on other submissions that were already submitted before.

CHAIR—Even under autonomy it could be argued that there should be a proportion of the income coming out of the Timor Gap development that automatically would be directed into East Timor. That is even under an autonomy arrangement. Under an independence arrangement—

Mr da Costa—Under independence the arrangement is a totally different matter, because that is related to sovereignty and it is related to legitimate rights for the East Timorese people. We understand that the current Timor Gap Treaty is signed by the Australian and Indonesian governments. But while the political settlement has occurred and, for example, independence has come out as the result, my colleague and I would argue that the signatory of Indonesia has simply been replaced by the East Timorese people as the partner of the signatory between East Timor and Australia, given the fact that East Timor is now becoming a new entity of this new treaty.

Having said this, please excuse my rudimentary knowledge of the international law system. But from my economic perspective and from my interest point of view and from an East Timorese point of view, I think within the interests of the East Timorese we should fight for East Timor's people to be able to negotiate the process with the Australian government with regard to East Timor.

CHAIR—If I could just clarify that, you would see East Timor and Indonesia both having rights to being party to that Timor treaty?

Mr da Costa—No, what I mean is that when, for example, East Timor votes for independence then Indonesia is out of the side. Then all of East Timorese people have the right to enter into negotiation with the Australian government.

CHAIR—Only East Timor?

Mr da Costa—Only East Timor.

CHAIR—Yet, as I understand, the Timor Gap straddles probably both East and West Timor. So you are not conceding anything to the Indonesians at all.

Mr da Costa—Absolutely. While saying this, I have in mind that the matter of boundary also has to be taken into consideration. The main proportion has to be given to East Timorese and to us—the main party between East Timor and Australia—plus taking into account Indonesia possibly can have some share in it. But the proportion of share, by how much, we do not know yet because that is something to—

CHAIR—No, I accept that. I am just wanting to see if those who advocate independence are prepared to concede any part of what might be the Timor Gap Treaty to Indonesia. It obviously is a very significant issue that is going to have to be dealt with, whether it is an independent East Timor or an autonomous East Timor.

Senator WEST—I understand we will certainly have submissions that the Australian government understood from the outset that the normal laws of state cession would apply in the event that East Timor became independent. The East Timorese would thereby become entitled to the benefits conferred by the treaty. The Indonesian government has in a number of statements this year confirmed this understanding. That would not need you to renegotiate. It may need you to resign but it would not need you to renegotiate, would it?

Mr da Costa—We argued it has to be renegotiated because from the very outset—from when the East Timor Gap treaty was signed by the then foreign minister, Mr Gareth Evans, and Mr Ali Alitas—no East Timorese were consulted in the process of negotiating the Timor Gap. So it is about time. If independence comes through, it is the legitimate right for East Timorese to enter into the negotiation process because geographically the location is very close to them. We understand that but we also share the border with other parts of the province of Indonesia.

Senator WEST—I think East Timor is the only one that shares the Gap with Australia.

CHAIR—It is, but I framed the question that way because I foresee the Indonesians saying, ‘We were the original signatories therefore we want a part of it.’ I can see that happening as sure as the sun rises and sets.

Mr da Costa—If that happens, it means all the contracting parties, all the parties involved, have to sit down and sort out the mess.

Senator WEST—Do you have a problem with what the final break-up is between Indonesia and Australia in relation to the treaty?

Mr da Costa—Yes. If you talk to the old guard of East Timorese political veterans, they feel disappointed at not being asked at the outset to be involved in the negotiating process. Even though the BHP companies, or whatever you call them, have already established their base camp in Suai—they even build hospitals there—we hope it was genuinely developed as part of the strategy of the Timor Gap treaty. But, again, we have not seen any contribution at all coming from the East Timor Gap towards the East Timor budget, which comes up every year, prepared by the Indonesian government. So we do not know. It is still not transparent to the East Timorese people, how much access there is to the resources, how much profit there will be or what figure is coming out of for the East Timor budget.

Senator WEST—Are you saying you do not know what the agreement was that Indonesia would benefit by?

Mr da Costa—We did know but at that time there were some pros and cons among the Indonesians, those who were knowledgeable on the treaty. Those who were knowledgeable said that Australia was the main beneficiary and that Indonesia got the other part. They call it ABC. The other part was not quite profitable for them so there were a lot of pros and cons, I remember, in the late 1980s for the minister, Ali Alitas. But, again, East Timorese people were marginalised at that time so we did not know whether it was beneficial to us. We know East Timor has offshore resources, that we have oil there, but no figure is available to us.

Senator WEST—I am trying to understand whether your complaint with Australia is that you think we have pinched too much, to put it crudely? Or is it the fact that, as is typical with a number of other resource rich provinces within Indonesia, a lot of money goes to Jakarta from that area and that you never see the whole lot back? You do not know how much goes to Jakarta therefore you do not know the percentage you are getting back.

Mr da Costa—Absolutely. That is the pattern.

Senator WEST—Okay.

Mr da Costa—Not only we complain; the oil resource provinces of Irian Jaya, Riau and Kalimantan all complain of the same thing. We do not want East Timor to suffer the same experience.

Senator WEST—That is what I was trying to understand. Was it a complaint with Australia or was it a complaint that you do not know what Jakarta got and therefore you could not say whether what Jakarta gave back to you was a realistic amount? That has clarified my concern, thank you. You heard Professor Hugo in his submission outlining what he considered to be the problem with human resource availability. You would appear, from your earlier comments, to agree with some of the things that he was saying. Am I correct there?

Mr da Costa—Yes, I do agree with most of the things that he said. He relied on the statistical data on East Timor. I am stressing human resource development is a must because we realise that no matter what institutions we have, what government we have, if it is not supported by the quality of human resource, then we end up nowhere. East Timor has to be putting more emphasis on human resource, especially in the primary, secondary and university levels.

Having said this, I am pleased to say that Australia is following the New Zealand pattern now. Most East Timorese are studying in New Zealand, followed by Australia, the United States and other countries in South-East Asia. I believe that human resource is a must but, in terms of education, we have to follow the non-formal education and formal education. Formal education, as I said, is primary, secondary and university. Non-formal is vocational schools, for example.

We have polytechnics and also other vocational schools at the secondary level but unfortunately most of our brighter students could not get jobs because of the lack of jobs available in East Timor. Some of them are unemployed even until now because of the situation. We live in a vicious cycle at the moment. We cannot go anywhere because of the lack of investors and other things. I believe that human resources is No. 1 priority for East Timorese people to carry on with their development efforts.

Senator WEST—With regard to those East Timorese that have gone to the polytechnics and trade schools and have trade qualifications and still cannot get jobs, is that because Indonesia is importing those skills from other areas within the archipelago?

Mr da Costa—Yes, there is a clear distinction between the East Timorese and non-East Timorese. The non-East Timorese are those who have migrated from other parts of the islands. They are more skilful, they are the ones who have access to the capitals. They are the ones who open restaurants and all other outlets throughout Dili and elsewhere. The East Timorese people unfortunately have no historical aptitude to be businessmen, with the exception of the ethnic Timorese Chinese community. The East Timorese people, because economics is so competitive, turn to the bank, for example, and request micro credit so they can run their own business on a small scale.

But there is a clear difference between East Timorese people. They are much more responsive to the economic business climate in East Timor. As a matter of fact they are the ones who dominate the whole economy. That is why in every riot that happens in East Timor, when these people come from Sulawesi, Java, they close down the restaurants, pack up everything and leave. The economy of East Timor is totally paralysed. That is because of the dominance of these outsiders in East Timor. There are lots of complaints but unfortunately some has to be blamed on these incomers but at some point we, the Timorese people, also have to be blamed. We did not have enough drive to compete with them because of a lack of business skills as well as opportunity.

Unfortunately, the Indonesian government operators always bring all their families, all their relatives and connections and, when it comes to getting access to the capitals and getting access to the credits given by the government, they are the ones who get it. As a matter of fact, they are better off than the East Timorese people.

CHAIR—Do you have any indication of how many East Timorese, who are now living in other parts of the world, would be prepared to come back to an independent East Timor? Has that been a study undertaken by you, given that many of those people, one would expect, have now got the educational skills, the vocational education skills or university educations to fill the public service jobs and/or the other jobs that would become available in an independent East Timor? Do you have any indication as to how many people would come back or are they too comfortable living in Adelaide or Sydney or wherever it might be?

Mr da Costa—That is a very tough question.

CHAIR—It is a very tough question but I just wondered because you have done a lot of research.

Mr da Costa—Our rough figures indicate there are about 30,000 East Timorese living abroad at the moment, inclusive of Portugal, Australia and elsewhere. But, to answer how many of them would be prepared to go back, it depends on individual circumstance whether they would like to go back. Most of them flee the country because of the trouble, because of the war, the persecution and all the other factors. But, having said this, once East Timor is developed in a democratic way, where peace and tranquillity prevail, I believe most of the East Timorese people will be prepared to go back. They feel it is their home country, their homeland, and they are prepared and eager to go back to contribute to the government of East Timor.

I cannot talk for them but, from available data and even press reports, they indicate they would like to go back but only when East Timor is a free, independent and democratic country. So maybe a little over 50 per cent would be happy to be go back but others have other families living comfortably—and we also need people living abroad so we can rely on them when we visit them!

CHAIR—It just seems to me there is a ready skills base out there for you to tap into, without relying on migrant workers to come in and take the positions. If you do not have the skills base available, you have to find someone from somewhere to do the jobs.

Mr da Costa—Yes, absolutely. I understand that the National Unity government, promoted by Xanana Gusmao and other political leaders around him, is going to call for people who have qualifications. People who have the capacity to go back there will be encouraged to go back to contribute their skills and knowledge and expertise to the community that desperately needs their help because we cannot go on relying on other sources, if the East Timorese people themselves do not go back and help their own community.

Senator WEST—You said a group had gone to Macau. That is obviously a Portuguese-speaking community. With the changeover, with Macau becoming part of China, what is happening to the East Timorese that are currently in Macau?

Mr da Costa—That is a good question, Senator. I hear from press reports, and from Father Francisco Fernandez—he is the so-called leader of the East Timorese community in Macau—that some of them are prepared to stay, and they have been invited to stay, and some of them are prepared to go back to East Timor. Some of them are prepared to go to Lisbon. So how many of them will go back and how many will stay we do not know at this stage. But Father Francisco argues that we need some Timorese community abroad because we cannot all go back. We need some people outside. I hope that answers your question.

Senator WEST—That is probably as good an answer as anyone can give, given that it is a situation of uncertainty, like Hong Kong was.

CHAIR—There was one comment I wanted to pick up on in your submission. It was under the heading ‘Political instability and the outlook for the 21st century’. You talk about ‘political instability in East Timor being removed through a peaceful settlement.’ What constitutes a peaceful settlement? I have raised this with other groups today that it may well be that those who are in an ascendant position now with the Indonesians—who are East

Timorese people—because they support the Indonesian position, become a minority who are frowned upon by those who ultimately take power. In that way you potentially do not have a peaceful settlement at all but just the disaffected groups changing place. How do you accommodate those people in any peaceful settlement to ensure that there is a long and lasting peace in East Timor?

Mr da Costa—Yes, I think that is the challenge for the East Timorese people in the future. Let us say it is the day after the ballot. It will be very tough to turn around the political differences among the pro-integrationists and the pro-independence overnight. What we mean by ‘political instability has to be settled peacefully’ is within the framework of the United Nations; that the United Nations has to go in, which is happening now. We hope there will then be a peaceful, smooth transition of the East Timorese political settlement.

CHAIR—What sort of period of transition do you see is necessary?

Mr da Costa—In my view, as long as the verdict is for independence, we can go straightaway for independence. I am sure that Ramos Horta and the others have already said that we need some sort of period of reconciliation among the East Timorese people in order to heal the wounds. The good point is that we have the Catholic Church there, with the leadership of the two bishops to lead us to socially unite the two camps.

CHAIR—So you see the Catholic Church playing a significant role in the outcome of any independence that might be granted to East Timor?

Mr da Costa—I do not say that the Catholic Church should play a significant role in the outcome but after the outcome is decided the Catholic Church is expected to play a significant role. The two bishops can appeal for the pro-integrationists and those who are in favour of independence to sit down together and work in a collective effort towards the transitional period, or whatever the outcome is. I would say the transitional period may last for two to three years.

CHAIR—Would that involve UN peacekeeping forces?

Mr da Costa—Absolutely, UN supervised autonomy, led by the UN. By that time we may call the National Unity government under the United Nations sponsorship. After a two- or three-year period, once the United Nations has assumed its responsibility, we hope that peace and tranquillity will exist and the Timorese people may then decide, through a popular declaration, ‘We are now ready for independence.’ That is what we can imagine at this point, assuming that independence is the verdict after the ballot.

CHAIR—The last question relates to other ethnic groups within East Timor, such as the Chinese. I do not know of others but I presume there are other ethnic groups who have been there for a period of time, who have been there ‘peacefully’—and I am not trying to judge them. Is there a part for them to play in the new independent East Timor? Also, what part will migration play for a new independent East Timor in terms of picking up people that may be needed in terms of skill levels or whatever it might be?

Mr da Costa—I am pleased to say that the ethnic Chinese Timorese people have played a very significant role in East Timor's economy in the past and possibly in the future as well. They do not create a lot of problems for the East Timorese people. Their relationship with the East Timorese people is very good and very harmonious. Whatever happens with the political issues they say, 'You guys can sort that out. We only do our business.' In this sense, they play a significant role in the East Timorese economy, regardless of any outcome.

On the migration issue, as Professor Graeme Hugo has already outlined, I imagine we will have some possible skirmish in the future from people crossing the border of West Timor or coming from other neighbouring islands. We cannot close doors to them, but we will open up our economy, our region, so that we can freely move, so that we can enable our people and our economy to move. That is what I can say at this point.

CHAIR—Thank you very much for your evidence today before this committee. We wish you success in your PhD.

Senator WEST—And your meeting with the World Bank.

Mr da Costa—Thank you.

[3.43 p.m.]

ELLIS, Dr Julie-Ann, Adherent, Adelaide Justice Coalition

SHEPHARD, Ms Susan, Spokesperson, Adelaide Justice Coalition

VAN DER SMAN, Ms Joyce, Organising Secretary, Adelaide Justice Coalition

CHAIR—I welcome representatives and associates of the Adelaide Justice Coalition to this hearing. In what capacity do you appear before the committee today?

Ms Van Der Sman—For today I am the MC for our submission to you. I am the Organising Secretary for the Adelaide Justice Coalition, which is an amalgamation of groups lobbying for justice in various areas of Australian life. You can see from the sheets that I have given you that we have a wide range of groups and a wide range of interests. Our submission to you today represents the work and thinking over many years of a very diverse group of individuals, professionals, workers, and the people we serve on a variety of issues. One of the things that we hold very strongly in common is our belief that as Australians we are approaching East Timor from a position that has been wrong for these last 25 years. That is my position as MC.

CHAIR—Are you appearing as the secretary for the organisation?

Ms Van Der Sman—That is correct.

Ms Shephard—I appear as a supporter.

CHAIR—As a member of the group?

Ms Shephard—Yes.

Dr Ellis—I appear as an adherent of the group. I am not an Adelaide resident.

CHAIR—Thank you. The sheet that was referred to by Joyce Van Der Sman was headed ‘Adelaide Justice Coalition’. It outlined the names of the various contributors to that organisation. In brief, I will just read them into the record: Prisoners Advocacy, Aboriginal Heritage Support Group, Adelaide Voices Inc., Brian Burdekin Clinic, Romero Community Development, Adelaide Day Centre for Homeless Persons Inc., and Refugee Support Service. Those are the constituent organisations.

The committee prefers all evidence to be given in public but should you at any stage wish to give any part of your evidence in private you may ask to do so and the committee will consider your request. The committee has before it a written submission from your organisation. Are there any alterations or additions you would like to make to the submission at this stage?

Ms Van Der Sman—Only additions.

CHAIR—Are they in a typed format?

Ms Shephard—I am just going to be speaking to them.

CHAIR—Your additions, I can assume therefore, will take the form of what we call an opening statement. We will not treat them as additions to the submission, we will treat them as an opening statement by your organisation. We are looking mainly for substantial additions by way of printed material to your submission.

Ms Van Der Sman—We can provide them in printed form after today if you need them.

CHAIR—No, we will have it in *Hansard* anyway, so it will not matter. Thanks very much. I now invite you to make an opening statement, and then we will proceed to questions.

Ms Van Der Sman—Our opening statement, Senator Hogg, is actually divided between the three of us.

CHAIR—That is fine. We are very flexible.

Ms Van Der Sman—Our opening statement consists of my introducing our point of view, then Susan speaking further to the written submission which she drafted on behalf of the coalition and then Dr Ellis speaking further. She will introduce her own, but there will be further points that we wish to add to our submission. Our Justice Coalition, which has for many years been in contact with a numberless group of people of Australia, has found unanimously that the people that we have been in contact with believe that Australia's position towards East Timor has been wrong for 25 years. We would like to introduce into this debate the points of view that we believe must be equally taken into account on the basis that the basic position of Australia's attitude and actions towards East Timor have been morally, ethically, democratically, diplomatically and practically wrong.

We believe that we, as Australians, are guilty of a betrayal of our East Timorese neighbours. We believe that our position is untenable. We believe that, whatever we do now, we cannot imagine that it could be worse than what we have done, and allowed to happen, over the last number of years. We believe that now is the optimum time—morally, diplomatically and ethically—to change our position. We believe that everything is in place for such a change. The May agreements, the UN, the world position, Portugal's work, the East Timorese people's work and the situation in Indonesia itself are right for such a change.

We believe that there is absolutely no reason for Australia not to change its position. We believe that as citizens of this country we want our government to represent what our moral and democratic stand is about our East Timorese neighbours. We do not want the betrayal to continue. We want every amount of support that our resource-rich country can give to East Timorese independence to be put in place immediately. We believe this must be a totally committed, determined approach.

The practicalities of how to do this are very well documented and researched by people and organisations, both government and non-government organisations, and by the UN.

There are many experts to turn to for advice, apart from the advice of the East Timorese leaders. We believe the basis for making such a change must happen now and that the moral conviction with which we do that is the most important issue to become very clear on. In the current situation of our relations with Indonesia, we must keep in mind that the military and the government of Indonesia are two separate forces. We believe that we must maintain relations with the government of Indonesia but that we must withdraw cooperation to the military. These are our basic standpoints.

I would like Susan, on behalf of the Justice Coalition, to speak further on the human, personal and moral basis for what this change is which is incumbent upon us as Australians to immediately fulfil.

Ms Shephard—Since drafting the submission which has been presented to you in March, naturally the situation in East Timor has changed quite considerably. I would just like to speak to some points we made at that time and bring them up to date. In reference to point A, the economic social and political conditions in East Timor, we called there for the presence of a UN peacekeeping force to provide the stability necessary to address the situation and provide the civilian population with the aid to meet its basic needs. Since writing that in March the situation has deteriorated despite the presence of the UN police contingent that was sent recently.

There are confirmed reports of increased violence, of villages burnt out, forcing up to 60,000 internal refugees, and many instances recorded of people starving, with relief unable to get through due to the paramilitary opposition along the way. We see this situation as being pitiful. Our response is pitiful. We are sending 1,000 police representatives there and not the peacekeeping force that has been asked for time and again by the East Timorese people themselves. We believe that there is a need to immediately upgrade the peacekeeping forces with a broadened role to give them real powers for intervention and the ability to provide a peaceful atmosphere for people to feel secure enough to take advantage of this vote being offered to them.

In reference to point B, the military presence in East Timor and reports of the ongoing conflict of the territory, the presence of the UN contingent there has given objective testimony to the fact that the level of violence is actually escalating and not decreasing with their presence. Further objective reports prove that military involvement in arming and training paramilitary forces was a further link between the military and the police force. Even though it is now called a police force, it still has very strong links with the military and with the people who have been responsible for attacks on the citizens. Attacks on UN personnel as well as citizens of East Timor show a total lack of commitment by the Indonesian military to providing the security and the atmosphere conducive to a free and fair referendum that was promised. They have said that they were capable of providing that. They have proven quite blatantly that they have no commitment to doing that. We believe that, on the contrary, they are openly committed to maintaining an atmosphere of terror and intimidation to prevent the opportunity of free choice for people.

The time has come for pressure to be brought to bear on the Indonesian government to remove their military forces, to disarm and disband the militias. They should be replaced with sufficient UN forces to ensure peace. There is a recent call from Community Aid

Abroad, which we support, that meanwhile the Indonesian troops should be confined to barracks. The militia should be taken into custody for any acts of intimidation and violence by the police force and the upgraded peacekeeping force should be put immediately in place.

Further to section C, in reference to the prospects for a just and lasting settlement of the East Timor conflict, I reiterate what Joyce has already said—that is, that the policies of the past 25 years have concentrated completely on what Australia has stood to gain from closer ties with Indonesia at the expense of the Timorese nation. This has been a disastrous policy for the people of East Timor, and we suggest that it must cease immediately.

We must make a real commitment to respond according to Timor's need and not to our convenience and self-interest. We believe that a just and lasting settlement can only occur when the territory is free from intimidation and exploitation from Indonesia—and, indeed, from Australia. When East Timor can make decisions based on their own citizens' needs, they will require an ongoing support from the world community, including Australia—and we owe that after the intervention that we have had over the 25 years which has led to the situation at the present time.

Those were the points that I wished to add to the submission that I have given. I would now like to add a personal statement to that. Today I do not appear before you as a diplomatic or political expert or as a person with a knowledge of the intricacies of this situation. You have had representations from many people today from whom I take my information and whom I trust to give me the truth on the matter. I appear here today as a humanitarian, as a human being who is responding to the pain and the distress of other human beings in East Timor. I come to you as a citizen of this country where the majority of our citizens have many rights that we take for granted: the right to speak out with impunity against injustice; the right to vote on the future of our country without fear of intimidation or violence; the right to have the freedom of movement around our city, our nation and indeed the world; the right to feel secure in our home with no threat of institutionalised violence; the right to expect the police and the military to protect and not oppress us; and, the right to expect the provision of basic needs of life by the government of our nation to all of its citizens.

These rights are clearly being denied to the East Timorese people, and have been consistently denied throughout the history of the Indonesian occupation. They are rights that all people everywhere should be able to expect, and they are rights that we should be supporting for East Timorese people. We believe that human decency dictates that we must do whatever is possible to ensure those rights are given to those people, to support the heroic struggle of the East Timorese to survive as a unique culture and gain their independence, which has never waned over 24 years of brutal occupation.

Our actions must be resolute and they must be immediate. We cannot afford to sit back on this any longer. We ask you today to put politics aside and to respond as human beings to this situation, with decency and with integrity to other human beings who need our help—who need your help, because you are the ones who can most directly influence the future of our nation's response.

In closing I would like to read to you a poem by a poet called Alex Tilman, an East Timorese in exile in Australia, because I believe it sums up the passion and the frustration felt by many thousands of people, like myself, who would like to do something to bring justice to East Timor but whose efforts until now have failed to move the people who could make that change. The poem is entitled *Trapped Between a Wall and a Soldier's Bayonet*:

Sh! Listen! Can you hear it? Someone is crying, screaming with pain.

Yes, I can hear it. Someone is pleading for mercy, calling for loved ones, friends, strangers, anyone.

I am trapped between a wall and a soldier's bayonet.

That voice is driving me insane. Someone is in pain, drowning in a pool of blood, a friend's blood, a mother's blood. The wall.

The cry is coming from behind that wall. Listen.

Please, pass me a sledgehammer and don't try to stop me. I don't care how thick a barrier that stands before me.

I recognise that painful voice. Could it belong to a friend we once had?

Yes, it is. My god, stop. Stop the torture. You're going to kill him. Stop.

What did he do to be trapped between that wall and a soldier's bayonet?

He had a dream. He wants to be free, to be independent.

He wants to build a nation, be a doctor, an engineer, a man with letters,

But not a freedom fighter trapped between a wall and a soldier's bayonet.

Hang on, my friend, I'm coming to save you.

As soon as this wall crumbles, this wall that divides us,

This wall made of solid bricks, of profit and greed, of politics and power, of torture and abuses, of sheer madness.

I will demolish it.

This sledgehammer is made of steel, coated with layers of peace and promises of freedom for you,

For your loved ones and your heroes, for your people, so you will no longer be trapped between a wall and a soldier's bayonet.

What now? I cannot break this wall? That's absurd, I'll break this wall with just one hit.

What? It belongs to my neighbour.

Well, what then is to be of the doomed youth trapped between a wall and the soldier's bayonet?

I now ask you to hear the evidence of Dr Julie-Ann Ellis.

Dr Ellis—I am here as an adherent of the Adelaide Justice Coalition. I am not a resident of Adelaide. I am here primarily to address one aspect of the inquiry: the past and present Australian government policy towards East Timor, including the issue of East Timorese independence. I am speaking as one of the hundreds of thousands of ordinary Australians who have lobbied and begged our government for many years to act on this matter. I am speaking as a rural South Australian. I am also speaking as a trained historian and as someone with some experience in development analysis in Third World countries.

I will not be giving you information from inside East Timor, but I am speaking as someone with nearly 24 years involvement in this issue. Over those 24 years three things have made themselves obvious about the Australian feeling on this issue. One is that, party politics aside, most Australians support a just position on East Timor. There is a great surge of goodwill in this country towards the East Timorese. People do not see them as an enemy. They do not see them as aliens. They see them as near neighbours and, of course, near neighbours who we have had much to do with in the past.

The second thing that struck me over 24 years was that over all of that time this issue has never, ever disappeared from the public consciousness or from the daily press. Not every day, but after maybe a gap of three weeks there has always been something, some little paragraph, something that just keeps us going. Of course, following the 1991 Santa Cruz massacre there was an explosion of interest. That massacre was just an ordinary massacre in East Timorese terms; what made it different was the fact that there was video evidence, and I bless that that happened.

The third thing that struck me over 24 years of involvement is that there has been constant lobbying from an extraordinary range of people in Australia, from old RSL guys, from conservative church people, from left wing people—in fact, I should not even say left wing, because this is not a left wing or a right wing issue; the range of people who are concerned is so great.

What does the lobbying feel like on the inside? Two occasions come to mind, and one of them is from that rural perspective. In 1991 I was, as I still am, a member of good standing of the Yacka Uniting Church, and we invited an East Timorese woman to come to speak to our church about East Timor. She did. There is a gap there, because I am just an ordinary church member; I am not a member of the Frome Presbytery. But the members of the Frome Presbytery who did come to that meeting were obviously moved greatly. They passed a resolution, which I will read to you, up to the synod—the synod is the governing council of the church in South Australia—asking them to call for, firstly, Australian recognition of the right of the East Timorese people to self-determination; secondly, suspension of the oil gap treaty with Indonesia pending resolution of the Portuguese case against Australia in the International Court of Justice; thirdly, a complete cessation of all military aid to Indonesia until Indonesia agreed to allow a United Nations organised and supervised act of self-determination; and fourthly, Australian support for moves at the United Nations for the immediate establishment of a United Nations presence within East Timor.

I am drawing that resolution to your attention because when it got to the council of synod, I have it from someone who was there that they were ‘gobsmacked’—their word, not mine—that this resolution came from an area that was thought of as a conservative rural

area. People in rural areas in the mid-North are meant to be just interested in grain issues, the price of lamb and that sort of thing. They were so astonished that they just went through the synod without a dissenting voice. The synod passed the resolution and sent it to the then Minister for Foreign Affairs, Gareth Evans, along with an explanation of how conservative an area they thought we were and therefore how astonishing it was to them that we should support that resolution.

The Uniting Church has gone on to have current involvement. I have some material here from the South Australian Uniting Church with some suggestions for what member churches might do. I will table that paper, if you are interested.

CHAIR—Yes, for the sake of the record.

Dr Ellis—It is a single page letter from Scott Litchfield of the World and Cross-Cultural Mission Section of the synod of South Australia dated Thursday, 1 July.

CHAIR—Thanks very much for identifying it. You have been before a committee before.

Dr Ellis—I am an historian. As far as that resolution is concerned, of course, time has shifted from when it was passed. It was passed by the synod on 4 April 1992. The second experience of lobbying comes from Easter this year. On Tuesday the 6th—that was the Tuesday after Easter—at my house in Yacka I received an email, as many other people received, alerting me that a massacre was about to occur in Likisia. We had four days to try to stop that massacre. I was one of, as I said, many people who would have received this email, the messages just go out. I can only tell you my experience.

There were three of us in my house at the time and we swung into action doing whatever we could over the next four days. We emailed and we faxed all politicians, including our Prime Minister, the Minister for Foreign Affairs and the opposition spokesman for foreign affairs, telling them that we had reliable information that this was about to occur. We wrote to any public opinion leader, to the bishops, to the churches, to the church councils, to the United Nations—just wherever we thought someone might have some influence. This was for four days—Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday—and then the massacre happened. It is a sad story. It is a story of lobbying that did not help, that did not work. It did not work, in part, because our government chose perhaps not to believe what we said was reliable testimony. This has happened to me before.

This is extra—I was not going to say this—but I have been to a bishop with photographs of torture and the bishop pretended to believe they were faked photographs; he now accepts they were real photographs. As I say, our government was perhaps pretending not to believe this massacre was about to happen. I do not have a qualm that four days was enough to stop that massacre.

You have heard someone giving evidence this morning, giving testimony, that General Wiranto has claimed publicly that those militias are under control and that he could disarm them in two days. I do not have a qualm that two days would be enough for our government, if it were serious, to say, ‘Look, \$6.5 million of military aid is stopping now if

that massacre happens.’ For one reason or another it did not happen. So there is another story of my life in lobbying.

What does it mean and what does it matter—Australian government in action? In that massacre and in everything in East Timor, I think we can say that our government’s inaction is read as world permission to continue genocide in East Timor. We are not an unimportant little country. What we do matters. Why does it matter? There are four reasons: governments are to run countries justly—that is what governments are for. Of course, you have the great privilege of being parliamentarians and parliament is where you debate how to run the country justly. The abstract notion of justice is why it matters if our government is inactive in the East Timor matter. It is actually not doing what a government does; it is failing in one of its primary responsibilities if it is inactive.

The second reason why it matters, speaking as an historian, is that the judgment of history is not 50 years off after we are all dead; the judgment of history is around the corner. Times are changing. We have all seen startling changes in 10 years, haven’t we? We have seen the Berlin Wall come down and we have seen the break-up of Yugoslavia. Things change dramatically. Things in Indonesia are changing dramatically. The fall of Suharto—who expected that? Malaysia changed its vote in the Security Council against Indonesia—who expected that? Things are changing and the judgment of history is around the corner. I do not want to see Australia stay in this shameful position.

Thirdly, why does it matter? Realpolitik—it does not do this country any good to be caught supporting an oppressor. When Indonesia achieves its destiny as a democratic and open country, how will they feel about the country that supported the oppressors? When East Timor achieves its destiny as a democratic and open country, how will they feel about the country that supported its oppressors? It matters in Realpolitik terms what the Australian government does and it matters what we do not do.

Fourthly—it is getting a bit dodgier here in terms of the judgment of history—there is an International War Crimes Tribunal and it is not at all beyond belief that someone or some persons or some governments from this country could be arraigned for complicity in war crimes. We have armed and trained in interrogation techniques an army which has oppressed and tortured our near neighbours. Yes, it matters if the government is inactive. I think that is all I will say. Thank you.

Ms Van Der Sman—Let me summarise by saying that the Adelaide Justice Coalition and all our many supporters believe that the Indonesian occupation of East Timor is illegal and we, as Australians, are complicit in that ongoing illegal deed. Until we send an adequate peacemaking force we are complicit in an illegal, immoral, ongoing outrage. Until we make an end to Australia’s military cooperation with Indonesia, we are complicit in an illegal, immoral, ongoing outrage. Until we work with international governments to lobby for pressure and sanctions against the Indonesian occupation and killings in East Timor, we are complicit in an illegal, ongoing outrage.

Until we listen to the East Timorese leaders, such as Xanana Gusmao and Jose Ramos Horta, and to the East Timorese people; until we listen to the UN and to governments worldwide; until we listen to non-government organisations, such as the Committee for an

Independent East Timor, which has been working in South Australia for over 20 years; until we listen to these voices, very well documenting all the evidence that your committee needs to hear—very well documenting all the evidence that you as individuals, Senator Hogg and Senator West, are going to take back to Canberra to our other elected representatives—until we listen to all that, we, individually and as Australians, are complicit in an illegal, immoral, ongoing outrage. That is what we wish you to understand, please.

CHAIR—Thank you. Senator West.

Senator WEST—You talked about adequate peacemaking.

Ms Van Der Sman—Yes.

Senator WEST—What numbers are you looking at? How are you going to do it?

Ms Van Der Sman—The peacemaking is a different name from peacekeeping.

Senator WEST—I know what peacemaking is. How are you going to do it?

Ms Van Der Sman—By working with the UN and other countries and their advisers—we have one, I believe, sitting in this room who gave evidence to you this morning—advisers that the UN has used in other areas who are well trained, well experienced in what such peacemaking efforts should be. We know that often you do not get a chance to study these questions because you are looking at papers saying what the ramifications of NATO bombing in Kosovo are. You are suddenly thinking, ‘Maybe we must be careful about what we do with East Timor.’

Senator WEST—No, that is not what I asked.

Ms Van Der Sman—What is behind your question then?

Senator WEST—I know what peacemaking is as opposed to peacekeeping. How are you going to undertake peacemaking, particularly if the Indonesians do not agree?

Ms Van Der Sman—Do not forget that the Indonesians have 20,000 at least armed people in there.

Senator WEST—That is right.

Ms Van Der Sman—So 300 Australians unarmed is not peacemaking.

Senator WEST—No, but you are talking about a UN force.

Ms Van Der Sman—That is right.

Senator WEST—I want to know how they are going to do it—I want to know the logistics; I want to know the numbers; I want to know what the possibility is. You blithely sit here and say ‘adequate peacemaking’. I want some idea—

Ms Van Der Sman—My view is not even on the agenda. We have said we are representing an outraged population that knows that the UN has advisers that the government of this country has access to for advice to answer your question. You do not need me to tell you an answer that is so well documented. I would like to include it in *Hansard*. I will ask the many people—including Mike Parsons, who is in this room—if they would please provide you again with the answer to that question you have just asked.

Senator WEST—I have a fear that if you go in for peacemaking, not peacekeeping, without the support or the agreement of the Indonesians—and, particularly, the militias as well—you run the risk of reprisals being committed by those people against the East Timorese who are there.

Ms Van Der Sman—The reprisals against the East Timorese have been utterly outrageous, and it has been partly because of us not standing up for the East Timorese that those reprisals have taken place.

Ms Shephard—And are taking place every day.

Senator WEST—You do not think they will get worse under peacemaking?

Ms Van Der Sman—They could not possibly be worse than what has been escalating in recent years.

Ms Shephard—There is not one East Timorese person who feels free of persecution, oppression, intimidation and terror living in their home. How could it be worse than that? If they are saying, over 24 years, that the right to independence is worth fighting for against this kind of intimidation, I cannot imagine that bravery.

Ms Van Der Sman—And who are we to question their choice in that matter?

Ms Shephard—And how dare we suggest that we are not courageous enough to support them in that call?

Senator WEST—I am not questioning that. I may or may not agree with what has been said, but I want to explore the whole issue—there is a lot of sighing coming from the background—and maybe play devil's advocate, because these are issues this committee has to look at. We have to be concerned about what will happen if you up the ante and put more force in. If there is force against force, what are going to be the repercussions upon the East Timorese who are there at present? That would appear to me, looking at the terrain of that place, to be ideal country for running guerilla warfare in.

I know it is only small, but what are going to be the repercussions on the East Timorese if the UN should use force to ensure peace? I am not sure those two comments actually equate. If you use force to ensure peace, are you going to get a backlash from the Indonesians and from the militias? Are they going to take to the hills? Are you going to get yourself into a Vietnam type of conflict? All our television will show here is body bags coming back to the Australia or to the US or to the EU countries. Then what is the situation going to be? I want to explore those issues, and I do not think that is unrealistic.

Dr Ellis—May I just say something about your guerilla comment. I do not claim to know what the UN plans will be, but you are quite right; it is excellent terrain for guerilla warfare. But guerilla warfare, as you also know, depends on having the support of a population. That is why the Falintil have been able to maintain a guerilla presence there. I think the trick would be that the Indonesian army and the militias would not have the support of the population. As for how big a force the UN would need to get in, I could not say. I dare say there are other people much more learned in that sort of matter than me who could answer that.

Ms Van Der Sman—I support Dr Ellis in that. Our sighing and our outrage is partly because we feel embarrassed that Australia has been both ignorant and naive about how you respond to bullies such as the Indonesian military. It is time we worked together with experts, such as UN advisers, on these situations. It is time we listened to the people themselves; they are the only ones to decide how much risk they are willing to take. It is time we included the moral perspective in these decisions. It is time we actually faced the fact that our stance over the last 25 years has led to more killings in East Timor than ever happened in Pol Pot's killing fields in Cambodia that we were so outraged about.

Senator WEST—How many do you think have been killed?

Ms Van Der Sman—I do not think; I can read the evidence—250,000, and in the last few months 500 or 600. That is absolutely outrageous. That is unacceptable from any point of view. The East Timorese people, the UN, the churches, the NGOs, the support groups and the professionals that are visiting them are all saying, 'We must support the East Timorese. We must work with international groups to end military attachments to Indonesia.' The Australian government is one of the few voices that is not saying this. Every amount of evidence, commonsense, conscience, experience as a person in your own household about how to stop a bully points to working with the UN to send a peacemaking force that is adequate to disperse the power that 20,000 armed Indonesian military and paramilitary have. It is very clear to us. If it is not to you, I feel embarrassed for you.

Senator WEST—I find that a bit patronising. I am not here—

Ms Van Der Sman—But I am speaking for people who I believe—

Senator WEST—Yes, I know and I am trying—

CHAIR—Can you understand that this is a Senate inquiry and we have to take these things in the broadest context? We do not need people to tell us what our view should be, just as we do not try to tell people what their view should be.

Ms Van Der Sman—No, I was responding—

CHAIR—We need to investigate the broadest range of facts, because we are responsible for reporting back to the parliament of Australia.

Senator WEST—And to test your assertions.

Ms Van Der Sman—I was trying to explain why we were sighing and looking miserable when you were asking that question. We are trying to express to you, as objectively and calmly as possible, what is really outraging us terribly.

Ms Shephard—With respect, Senator Hogg and Senator West, we were invited here to do just that today.

CHAIR—That is right, and we will respect the views that you present to us. But that is not necessarily a means by which you can judge what our views might be or what we need to do as part of the process to pursue witnesses from all views.

Ms Shephard—I do understand that.

CHAIR—We will get people with a disparate range of views, whether they be political, social, religious or whatever. It is part of our task to pursue the issues through a whole wide range of views.

Ms Shephard—That is understood.

Ms Van Der Sman—The facts, the evidence, the weight of democratic worldwide opinion, the photos from East Timor and the advice from UN advisers has for the last 25 years failed to move successive Australian governments. What will move them? We are a group of people wanting to move you. Our outrage is all we have left, because the facts are there for you.

CHAIR—You come before us with your outrage, and that is fine, but what we will do at the end of the day is hear evidence from a wide range of sources—from sources as outraged as you to sources as opposite to you as you could hope to find. We have to listen to all views; you do not.

Senator WEST—We could well have people saying, ‘You’ve made these statements; why are you on the opposite side of the perspective?’ What I am seeking from you is arguments for when somebody comes up and says you cannot do it. I want you to tell me why you can do it, so I can then pose those questions to them as well.

CHAIR—Just as an example, we have a number of submissions which would totally dispel, historically, what you have said. I am not saying their view of the world is right or wrong, but they have an entrenched view that what they have seen as being the historical viewpoint of what has happened in East Timor is in effect the correct view. I have not arrived at a judgment of whether their view is correct or incorrect. We are purely and simply here to listen to the evidence you want to present. Let us understand that this committee at its own initiative has chosen to take the inquiry around every capital or major place throughout Australia. In terms of the resources and the working of the committee, it would be easier for us to make this a brief inquiry—it is the same with any inquiry in terms of the amount of money, public participation or whatever—but we have chosen to get as wide a viewpoint as we possibly can.

That does not mean we will agree, in either part or in whole, with everyone who appears before us. We may agree with some of what some people say, we may disagree violently with some people, but this is as much an opportunity for the Australian people, who are sometimes cynical and critical of the Australian political system, to be able to say they have put their viewpoint before a committee of the Senate of Australia.

Ms Van Der Sman—All right. But not to waste any more of everyone's time, we would be very happy to put some simple and straightforward answers to Senator West's questions. If anyone bails her up in the corridors, she can say straight off the cuff why we should send a peacemaking force, if she believes that to be correct.

Senator WEST—And the fact that it is peacemaking, not peacekeeping. That is an entirely different situation.

Ms Van Der Sman—We will add that.

Senator WEST—Dr Ellis made the comment that we should have stopped the massacre. How should we have stopped the massacre? I want to know what you meant. The massacres have been appalling. Nobody in their right mind could condone those massacres. But I want to know, sitting here or sitting somewhere on this island, physically how we stop a massacre there?

CHAIR—I am not being critical of you but how do we stop it based on an email? Do you want to know how many emails we receive daily? It is a real, serious point. It is not only emails we receive daily. How many faxes? How many letters?

Dr Ellis—That is partly why we addressed it to the Prime Minister and the Minister for Foreign Affairs, who each have a lot more staff than private members have. Nonetheless, how could it have been stopped? I sincerely believe that four days is enough to get a message from one head of government to another. By now our government must know which are the reliable sources. Our intelligence department must know which are the reliable sources. And with the Likisia massacre, the news was everywhere. All it would have required, if you really wanted to stop it happening, would have been a sudden ministerial visit.

Ms Van Der Sman—That is right. It is simple.

Dr Ellis—Well, it is not simple but it—

Senator WEST—But what if the Indonesians will not give the minister an entry visa? Laurie Brereton has been trying to get a visa—

Dr Ellis—He is not the minister.

Senator WEST—No, he is the shadow minister.

Dr Ellis—Yes, that is true.

Senator WEST—And he has been trying to get an entry visa—

Dr Ellis—Yes, I am aware of that.

Senator WEST—and he cannot get one.

Dr Ellis—Yes, but I do not think they would knock back the government.

Ms Shephard—That is right.

Senator WEST—I think they probably would.

Ms Shephard—Then why are we continuing to deal so closely with this government if we are not being respected when we try to have some reciprocal rights?

Senator WEST—As I said, that is a question—

Dr Ellis—We are not a little unimportant country. This is a country that actually has influence. Because we are small in population and relatively small in economy, I think we underestimate how much swing we actually have. And of course we are used to measuring ourselves against the really big guys.

Ms Van Der Sman—Up until some time ago Australia had a surprisingly good reputation internationally for speaking out on human rights issues.

Dr Ellis—Some Pacific governments are, so to speak, wild cards, but the Indonesian government is not really a wild card. They do act in more predictable ways.

Senator WEST—Do you think they have the will to stop what is happening?

Dr Ellis—The Indonesian government?

Senator WEST—Yes. Do they have the will to stop what is happening in East Timor?

Dr Ellis—At the moment it is still fluid, in the post Suharto stage.

Ms Van Der Sman—That is right.

Dr Ellis—In the Suharto stage of course it did not. At the moment it is fluid and the coalition has not yet formed, as you know. Some sections of the coalition do have the will to stop it.

CHAIR—What is your assessment of what will happen with the new Indonesian government when it is formed?

Dr Ellis—We will have to wait and see who makes up the coalition that is going to govern.

CHAIR—That is right, but my understanding is there is not a great deal of desire on the part of whatever coalition might be formed to cede independence to East Timor for a number of internal Indonesian reasons which, whilst we might not accept them, whilst we might not agree with them, are nonetheless very valid reasons in their eyes.

Dr Ellis—In their eyes, yes. The two likely looking dominant partners in coalition are Megawati Sukarnoputri's crowd and Golkar. The government is going to presumably be formed around one of those and we will just see what alliances they make.

Ms Van Der Sman—Also, because of this fluidity now, that is why we have been emphasising that now the time is right for Australia to go with the UN and Portugal and other nations of this world.

Dr Ellis—I was going to say that therefore you would be looking at whoever forms the minor partnership. We know from Australia that minor partners and even the Democrats, who are not even a partner in coalition, can actually swing a lot of influence. It does depend on how that washes up. Even Megawati Sukarnoputri though, for nationalist reasons, does not of course want to come in and be seen to be instantly diminishing the size and the glory of Indonesia—of course she does not want to. Nonetheless, as was said famously, East Timor has been a stone in Indonesia's shoe and it is a nuisance to them, too. It has not paid off quickly and easily, the way they hoped it would.

CHAIR—We have evidence to that effect. We have had evidence to the effect that Indonesia does not necessarily see having East Timor as a plus on the balance sheet.

Ms Van Der Sman—That is right.

CHAIR—It is seen as being, as you say, a stone in the shoe. It is a lead weight in the saddlebags. You can describe it however you might like, but nonetheless there are very strong differences of opinion within the Indonesian military, within the Indonesia political parties and general politics within Indonesia itself which is still emerging as to what might ultimately be the fate of East Timor in their eyes.

Ms Van Der Sman—In light of that, what is against Australia actually making the stand that its citizens want it to make, the moral stand, which is in keeping with the UN and other nations? What is against us actually making a strong stand? The Committee for Independence in East Timor here in South Australia has been working on this issue for many years, so I will not go out and say what the practical steps are. But the practical steps depend on the will, as you say. What is against us actually making a clear statement of the will of Australia?

CHAIR—Let us go through it. The practical steps are, firstly, that the government of the day make the decisions. Neither Senator West nor I are part of the government of the day, unfortunately, so in that sense we will have little or no influence in changing the minds of the government of the day. It is a matter of decision for the government of the day in the first instance.

In terms of this committee and its report, this committee is required to report to the Senate by 21 October this year. I can assure you that there is absolutely no way that this committee will report to the Senate by 21 October because of the timetabling of getting around to the various states to get witnesses to appear before the committee. I can tell you now that we are doing Adelaide today and Perth tomorrow. Then the next date the committee will reconvene to continue this hearing has been set down for somewhere in the middle of August I think. That is for no other reason than the availability to have sufficient people to attend the committee to have what we call a quorum.

The committee hearings will proceed then in September. We are visiting Darwin to take evidence from people there. Even though our reporting date is 21 October, the process still requires us to take evidence in November in Sydney and Melbourne. There is just no way physically we can complete this inquiry, in my view, and have a report written before about the end of February-March next year. That is just to give you some idea of our process. We are not trying to frustrate the process of the inquiry. The pure, simple facts of the matter are that due to the constraints of time upon people and the demands of people—because we just do not participate on one committee; we participate on a number of inquiries—it is just physically impossible to get the inquiry completed, in my view, before about the end of March.

That is why we have focused on the future. We can go back and we can haul over the past. We can try to make a judgment on the past. That is going to be a matter of historical fact, historical record. Either someone is right or wrong, or everyone is right and no-one is wrong, or everyone is wrong and no-one is right—who knows? But this committee has set out to look at what our future relationships need to be with East Timor, with Indonesia. If East Timor becomes an autonomous part of Indonesia then we have to look at how we are going to deal with that relationship. That is still a possibility.

Ms Van Der Sman—Certainly.

CHAIR—It is highly unlikely, but a possibility. If East Timor becomes independent then we have to look at how we are going to develop our relationship with East Timor and also continue our relationship with Indonesia. It is, nonetheless, a sovereign nation around us and it has security and trading implications for us and we must look at what our relationship will be there.

Ms Van Der Sman—Absolutely.

CHAIR—So that has been the purpose of this committee. We are trying to give as many people and as many groups an opportunity as is reasonably practicable to present evidence to us. At the end of the day, if the process is understood, this committee will write a report. That report will then be presented to the Senate and the government of the day will respond to our report. The government will either accept part or the whole of our report or reject part or the whole of the report and so on. This committee undoubtedly will not influence anything that happens within the next three to four months. It may be that, if the media were present or it was getting quite substantial media coverage, elements of what is presented to this committee would get prominence and may influence the government of the day.

Ms Van Der Sman—That has really depressed us dreadfully to hear you say all of that.

CHAIR—I do not know why you are depressed.

Ms Van Der Sman—Because we have no access to a democratic voice in this country. This process you are talking about—I understand all that.

CHAIR—That is the price of every committee, though.

Ms Van Der Sman—None of us are naive. I believe I would rather be walking out of this room now than to even bother to explain to you on behalf of our supporters here, but most particularly on behalf of the Timorese that are dying at the moment, that you cannot tell people that, if the media were here, maybe something might happen; that if the committee did not have to wait until November to hear evidence, maybe something might happen; that if the government of the day had made a decision, maybe something might happen. It is absolutely outrageous that we are not responding now, that we did not respond last year, that we did not respond every year for 25 years immediately to what is right in East Timor. It is absolutely outrageous that this non-democratic process—

CHAIR—I do not think you understand. We have witnesses at the table. We are responding to the evidence that you are giving. The evidence that you are giving will be read by the shadow minister.

Ms Van Der Sman—It is not good enough. We do not get a democratic hearing in this country. We are getting a government and an opposition that are content to let these farcical processes take their time while people are dying, and that is not good enough. We do not accept that we have to put up with that.

CHAIR—With the greatest of respect, I think you do not accept or understand the processes of what this committee is about.

Ms Van Der Sman—I do understand it.

CHAIR—It is most unfortunate—

Ms Van Der Sman—It is wrong. It is not democracy.

Members of the audience interjecting—

CHAIR—These proceedings are suspended. Thank you.

Subcommittee adjourned at 4.45 p.m.

