

Dr. George Preston,
18 Overend Street,
BRUNSWICK, VIC. 3056

March 25, 1983

The Hon. Bill Hayden,
Minister for Foreign Affairs,
Parliament House,
Canberra, ACT 2601.

Dear Mr Hayden,

We are writing to respectfully request that you meet a delegation representing our organisations before your visit to Indonesia. This letter follows a telegram to this effect sent to you on March 20 by Dr George Preston of the Australia-East Timor Association.

We hope that this meeting will inaugurate a process of consultation between yourself as Minister for Foreign Affairs and our organisations as representatives of Australians concerned for the welfare of the East Timorese people.

The particular interests of our organisations are as follows:

- * Australia-East Timor Association - the Association was formed on December 7, 1975 in response to, and in recognition of, the establishment of the Democratic Republic of East Timor to support the people of East Timor in their struggle for independence and to uphold the United Nations declaration of the rights of colonial people to self-determination.
- * The Campaign to Reunite in Australia the Families of Timor (RAFT) - RAFT is a network of Australian families, church and community groups and individuals devoted to reuniting Timorese families in Australia and to winning admission to Australia for all Timorese refugees.
- * Indonesia Action Group - since 1973 this group has kept a close watch on the human rights, and political and economic situation in Indonesia and has aimed to increase awareness of these matters.
- * East Timor Support Group - formed in October 1982, this group comprises members of the ALP and aims to promote the ALP policy on the right of the people of East Timor to self-determination and independence and to ensure implementation of that policy now the Labor Party is in Government.
- * Christians in Solidarity with East Timor - formed in 1982, this group comprises Protestants from a number of denominations and Catholic religious, clergy and laity and aims to make the Australian Churches responsive to appeals from the Catholic Church in East Timor for assistance and solidarity.

We welcomed your comment reported in the Australian on February 25, 1983 that:

"Our party policy is clear. It lays down a number of obligations including no military aid to Indonesia while the criteria we have laid down aren't met. I find no problems with that".

We note that you have made no further comments on the issue.

We are, however, deeply concerned by the reported comments of Mr Hawke during the election campaign that "his government would not feel bound to apply points in the July 1982 National Conference policy on East Timor that would cause grave offence to Jakarta and disrupt ties between Indonesia and his government".

We are also dismayed that there has been no official denial of Peter Hastings' claim in the Sydney Morning Herald of March 18 that Prime Minister Hawke and yourself informed the Indonesian Ambassador that the ALP's East Timor policy was "an embarrassment".

We do not dispute that an Australian Government should aim to have good relations with Indonesia but we find it difficult to understand why there has been no reaffirmation of the ALP's position that the people of East Timor have an inalienable right to self-determination and independence. We believe that a Labor Government should defend and explain the clear ALP policy on this issue especially since this policy clearly enjoys overwhelming support within the Labor Party and beyond it within the wider community.

In our respective areas of interest our organisations continually monitor the situation in East Timor and Indonesia. We would like to convey to you our assessment of the state of the East Timor question at the international level and of the present situation inside East Timor. We would therefore appreciate the opportunity to consult with you as you formulate the details of government action on East Timor.

It is with these concerns in mind that we seek an urgent meeting with you. We look forward to an early reply.

With every best wish,

Yours sincerely,

George Preston

Chairperson,
Australia-East Timor
Association

Suzanne Cooper

Campaign to Reunite
in Australia the
Families of Timor

Ian Bell

President,
Indonesia Action Group

Gordon Bryant

East Timor
Support Group

Fr Chris Dureau sj

Christians in
Solidarity with East Timor