

**STATE LABOR PARTY CONFERENCE  
DEATH PENALTY, OPPOSITION**

*Statement*

**HON SALLY TALBOT (South West)** [9.40 pm]: I will not take up much of the time of honourable members tonight. We have had a long day and I suspect we will have another long one tomorrow. I am deeply impressed that the subject of the Australian Labor Party's state conference was first raised tonight by the Leader of the Opposition, Hon Norman Moore, as that is exactly the subject I want to canvass tonight very briefly. This was a very significant conference for a number of reasons. Firstly, it showed that the Labor Party is still the party of ideas and the party that comes up with policies and programs that help ordinary working families. We did that by way of a number of policy decisions and a number of resolutions. This was a particularly important conference for me personally, as it was the first conference at which Perth Labor Women, a sub-branch of the Australian Labor Party with which I have had a close association over the past few years, elected its own delegate to represent women at the conference. That was very ably done this weekend by Marinomoana Ward, who attended the conference and, no doubt, will be reporting back to a number of very energetic women who make up the activists within that branch.

The conference was particularly notable for one resolution that was passed, and that is the one to which I want to draw the attention of this house tonight. It reads as follows -

That this 2005 WA State Labor Conference reasserts its opposition to the death penalty as an expression of its commitment to the principle that human life deserves the respect of the community, their governments and their laws; and

That the State Conference notes that the Parliamentary Labor party at both the Federal and State level has successfully sponsored parliamentary motions that have called upon the Singaporean Government to grant clemency to Australian citizen Mr Tuong Van Nguyen and a reprieve from the mandatory death penalty that he has received in the Singapore Courts; and

That this State Conference likewise publicly calls upon the Government of Singapore to extend clemency to our fellow Australian, Mr Tuong Van Nguyen and grant him a reprieve from the mandatory death penalty that he has received from the Singapore Courts.

Very briefly, the motion was particularly about the tragic event that is about to take place at the end of this week. However, there is a much more general point here. There are a number of reasons for opposing the death penalty. Many people refer to the mistakes that have been made and the likelihood of wrongful convictions, and it has also been pointed out that there is absolutely no evidence to suggest that the death penalty deters criminal activity. It operates in a haphazard way. In many countries it is regionally and racially biased and, as I am sure many members would agree, there is of course no painless way of executing someone. There might be ways of alleviating some of the distress of the people who have to carry out the execution, but basically there is no painless way of executing somebody. However, in the final count, what this boils down to is reflected in the 1948 United Nations General Assembly resolution, which notes that no-one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment. The reality is that the death penalty is the ultimate cruel, inhuman and degrading punishment, and to the extent that any country still imposes the death penalty on people, we are all demeaned by those actions.