

PETER GRAY

Statement by Member for Jandakot

MR J.M. FRANCIS (Jandakot) [12.50 pm]: I wish to bring to the attention of the house the plight of a fellow Western Australian, Mr Peter Gray. For the past four years Mr Gray has been detained by the Republic of Mauritius. In August 2005 Mr Gray was arrested on the alleged suspicion of heroin trafficking. He was finally charged with this offence on 30 August 2008. In February 2009 the prosecution in Mauritius withdrew the heroin-trafficking charge but, instead, charged Mr Gray with conspiracy to import drugs. In response to this new charge, Mr Gray has lodged an abuse of process claim against the public prosecutor, which is currently being heard. Voicing our protest against the conduct of this case is not about interfering with the due legal course of another sovereign country. I believe that when Australians travel abroad they are bound by the laws of the countries they visit. We would not welcome any attempt by a foreign government to interfere in the judicial process in Australia. Although I appreciate that due process can be lengthy, I object to the time it has taken to reach this point. I support the need to expedite due process as this matter has been ongoing for four years. Having been briefed on the circumstances of Mr Gray's arrest, I suspect him to be innocent. Regardless of his guilt or innocence, four years in any language is far too long for a judicial system of any modern society to deal with a matter like this. Being in the wrong place at the wrong time is not sufficient grounds to be detained for more than four years without trial. I have written to the Mauritius High Commissioner to Australia outlining my grievance regarding Mr Gray's treatment by her country. I still await a response. Our thoughts are with Mr Gray and his family during this continuing ordeal.