

A Submission

To

The Joint Standing Committee on Treaties Inquiry

Into

***Consequences of Termination of the Treaty between
Australia and the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste on
Certain Maritime Arrangements in the Timor Sea***

Chris Dureau & Christine Perkins

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The CMATS Treaty and the issue of resource sharing between Australia and Timor-Leste is one that is very important to us. Thus we are compelled to let you know of our position on the matter and how much we are committed to this issue being resolved.

We are two people who have worked in international aid and development in support of Timor-Leste since the 1980's. We have visited Timor-Leste in different capacities for various organisations funded by the Australian Government and the Australian community. We have made more than eighty short, medium and long term visits to implement programs in the phases that Timor-Leste has experienced since 1991: humanitarian aid; emergency assistance; stabilization; and subsequent development work.

We have worked at all levels from senior government to local community in managing volunteer placements; service delivery, including water and sanitation, environmental health and hygiene and HIV/aids; local government and democratization; rural women's empowerment; suco development; and supporting local NGOs.

Our work in international development has taught us that what is most important is that ***people are involved making decisions about their own futures and are provided the opportunity to make use of their own resources*** in achieving that future. Dependency on outside support does not lead to sustainable development. Timor-Leste has the right to the resources in the Timor Sea on the northern side of a median line. Australia has been denying them access to those resources. This now has to stop if the Timorese are to have a chance to build their future sustainably.

Ownership is a prerequisite for sustainability. When communities and their representative governments fully own the process and the resources required to achieve their development goals these goals are most likely to be sustainable. We don't believe the current CMATS Treaty provides the Timorese with full ownership of the resources available to them. We do believe that should they obtain ownership of what is rightfully theirs, the development outcome for Timor-Leste and for the region will be more sustainable.

We have also learnt that the most successful aid programs are based on establishing ***equitable partnerships***. Partnership requires trust, equal access to resources and a commitment on both sides to achieving the goals of the other. We believe that the current CMATS Treaty hinders any possible partnership in development that the Timorese and Australian Government might have in the future. This will remain so until the Timorese are satisfied that international law in regard to maritime boundaries has been adhered to and a median line between our two countries is agreed upon.

We have found that the Timorese are appreciative of the aid that the Australian Government has given and we have benefited professionally and personally from being part of that effort. However, the relationship that has been established will remain in jeopardy until the issue of ownership of resources and the maritime boundary is resolved.

There can be no development without justice!