

Nichola Hungerford

10th March, 2017

Committee Secretary
Joint Standing Committee on Treaties
PO Box 6021
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Committee Secretary,

Re: Certain Maritime Arrangements - Timor-Leste (CMATS)

I am an Australian Citizen, living and working in Timor-Leste. I have done this for five of the last eight years – either as a volunteer or with the United Nations. My family has strong links with the country, with my father coming here in late 2000 as a volunteer and came back here several times since as a volunteer; my niece was a teacher at the International School; and I have a cousin who comes yearly to volunteer his time at the hospital. I am saying all this so you understand my short submission, is coming from my love and respect for the country, and that I have some knowledge about Timor-Leste.

I was pleased to see that Timor-Leste and Australia finally agreed to the removal of CMATS. Australia's relationship with Timor-Leste seems to be strong, and as close neighbours this is very important. However, it took a lot of pressure from people within Australia to get the Australian Government to take a role in helping this very poor nation. I believe that Australia should not be forced into helping Timor-Leste but should have a moral responsibility to help.

I urge that the negotiations take the clear stance of adopting a median line. It is clear and simple – a line exactly halfway between our two countries. Please don't think about oil and money – but fairness.

Timor-Leste is so poor. Even while I live in the capital – I am surrounded by poverty every day. On the road where I live, many of the residents still have no easy access to water – the women and children cart their water bottles to a common place twice a day; there are still children foregoing school, so they can help their family by selling eggs and other food stuff. In the districts/municipalities things are much worse. Just from my personal experience, some of my friends families have severe malnutrition, another friends sister recently died in childbirth – she was 28 years old, and now the grandparents are looking after the baby; another friends aunt died from a simple asthma attack as she had no access to medicine; my Timorese friend who have jobs earn between \$150 per MONTH to the very lucky ones who earn \$900 per Month – and Timor is not a cheap country like Indonesia or Thailand to live; one of my friends graduated from University last year with a Bachelor of Accounting – he was one of 300 – this is one of five universities – and one year of graduation – on that day 300 young educated accountants were looking for a job in a small poor country – what hope is there... I can go on and on and on, and this is just from my personal experience.

Timor-Leste faces so many hurdles before it can really start moving forward. I want to show some of the harsh realities of life in Timor-Leste - I believe by knowing the facts, it will be easier to make a fair decision about why we need a median line.

- 60% of the population is under 25
- 74% of the population in rural areas
- 47% of children under the age of five have CHRONIC malnutrition
- 41% live on less than \$1.25 (USD) per day
- 30% don't have access to safe water
- Over 700,000 people don't have adequate sanitation

I am sure in this committee, will have access to all this information, so I won't go on. But we are talking about people's lives; their basic day to day needs are not being met. I want Australia to stand up and let Timor-Leste have what is theirs, and to make the decision about the border between our two countries - out of compassion and not for want of resources. Australia has so much and Timor-Leste has so little.

Thank you for your time and your consideration.

Yours sincerely,

Nichola Ann Hungerford
Australian Citizen working as a volunteer in Timor-Leste