

Submission to: Joint Standing Committee on Treaties

On: Consequences of termination of the Treaty between Australia and the Democratic Republic of Timor Leste on Certain Maritime Arrangements in the Timor Sea

On behalf of: the ACT Timor Sea Justice Action Group

9 March 2017

The ACT Timor Sea Justice Action Group is a group of concerned ACT residents of mixed backgrounds and political persuasions, formed in 2016 and affiliated with the National Timor Sea Justice Campaign (www.timorseajustice.com). We are actively seeking the establishment of a fair and permanent maritime boundary between Australia and Timor Leste as a matter of urgency.

We congratulate the Governments of Australia and Timor Leste on their recent commitment to good faith negotiations of the maritime boundary between our two countries. We underline that without applying the principle of a median line between Australia and Timor Leste, Australia defies justice and international precedent.

A significant debt is owed to the people of Timor Leste by Australia: for their unflinching support of Australian troops in the face of great danger during World War II; and for Australia's failure to take action following Indonesia's invasion of Timor Leste in 1975. Australia's failure to negotiate a permanent boundary with Timor Leste through the resource rich Timor Sea (symbolic of our value of our relationship with Timor Leste, this is the only gap in Australia's vast maritime boundary) has effectively deprived our near neighbour of billions of dollars of resource revenue that would have a significant impact on the fledgling Timorese economy.

This blatant failure by Australia – a vast, wealthy, resource rich and secure nation – to repay our debts to one of our closest and poorest neighbours – a brand new, developing nation desperately in need of a secure income to shore up their fledging economy – is disgraceful.

By withholding a resolution of the maritime border, Australia's generally good international reputation is at significant risk.

It is the view of the ACT Timor Sea Justice Action Group that as general awareness of the Australian Government's treatment of Timor Leste improves, the Australian people will overwhelmingly support the establishment of a permanent maritime boundary, based on median line principles to ensure that Timor Leste can take advantage of **all** of its natural resources. We agree with Labor's foreign affairs spokeswoman Penny Wong who has said that the maritime boundary dispute had

gone on too long and has been "damaging for Australia's interest as well as East Timor's."

The ACT Timor Sea Justice Action Group has been, and will continue to be, proactive and vocal on this issue. We will continue to speak with Members of Parliament and the Assembly; write media releases; and raise the consciousness of the general public about the maritime dispute between Australia and Timor Leste.

Timor Leste is not seeking charity from Australia. They are understandably seeking what is fair and right: the establishment of a clear, permanent maritime boundary along the median line between our two countries. We appeal to the Australian Government to negotiate fairly and transparently to establish that border as a matter of urgency.

For an excellent overview of the issues, we would like to draw the Committee's attention to the documentary film *Time to Draw the Line* by Fabio Cavadini and Amanda King, available at <http://timfo.org/new-blog-avenue/2016/10/12/draw-the-line-movie-premiere>

Further information on the ACT Timor Sea Action Group and other groups throughout Australia can be found at <http://www.timorseajustice.com/about>