

Timor Sea Treaty
Submission No:52.....

Received 26 August 2002
f.h. phed

24/8/02

The Hon. Julie Bishop MP,
Chair Joint Standing Committee on Treaties
Parliament House
CANBERRA 2600

Dear Ms Bishop

Ratification the Timor Sea Treaty

We urge you to ensure that ratification of the Timor Sea Treaty recognises the extremely difficult economic and social conditions in East Timor and builds upon the goodwill towards the East Timorese people that we believe exists within the Australian population. We urge you to be generous in such negotiations at a critical time for a new nation.

In particular, we urge you to ensure that the Treaty is accompanied by public commitments to the measures outlined below. We believe that ratification of the Treaty without such commitments will not provide the best possible outcome for East Timor and is likely to lead to a negative perception of Australia from the East Timorese people.

Our concerns include the following.

- The failure to unlock the resources of the Timor Sea for the full benefit of East Timor may have significant consequences for longer-term human development, economic self-reliance and stability in East Timor. Revenues from oil and natural gas currently represent East Timor's greatest hope for meeting the people's basic needs, including economic development, health and education. In contrast, Australia is already well endowed with natural, mineral and petroleum resources and wealth.
- As a new nation, the people of East Timor deserve the opportunity to pursue their desire to delimit their sovereign boundaries and secure their physical place in the world.
- Australia's withdrawal from the dispute settlement mechanisms of the International Court of Justice (ICJ) and United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) seems to be an over-reaction that severely limits East Timor's options in seeking an objective, third party resolution of the maritime boundary dispute.
- An economically viable East Timor is in Australia's interests and that of the region. By ensuring that ratification of the Treaty is accompanied by the measures outlined above, Australia has the opportunity to assist East Timor towards the goal of economic self reliance.

Yours sincerely

Jenny Stephens & Tony McBride

cc. The Hon. Kim Wilkie MP, Deputy Chair Joint Standing Committee
on Treaties