

Government Response to the 49th Report of the Joint Standing Committee on Treaties

The Government thanks the Committee for the careful consideration given to the Timor Sea Treaty in the hearings and in the Report. In relation to the Committee's three specific recommendations the Government responds as follows:

(paragraph 4.61) The Committee supports the Timor Sea Treaty and recommends that binding treaty action be taken.

The Treaty was brought into force in accordance with Article 25 by an exchange of Notes in Dili on 2 April 2003.

(paragraph 4.62) The Committee recommends that the Government of Australia use its best endeavours in accordance with the Memorandum of Understanding signed in Dili on 20 May 2002 to conclude the International Unitisation Agreement for the Greater Sunrise fields on or before the date on which the Timor Sea Treaty is ratified and in any event before 31 December 2002 as this would best serve the best interests of both nations.

The Agreement between the Government of Australia and the Government of the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste relating to the Unitisation of the Sunrise and Troubadour Fields was signed in Dili on 6 March 2003. Although both Governments endeavoured to conclude the Agreement by 31 December 2002, they did not succeed in doing so. The National Interest Analysis for the Agreement was tabled on 14 May 2003.

(paragraph 5.41) The Committee urges the Government of Australia to use its presence on the administrative agencies of the Joint Petroleum Development Area to ensure that occupational health and safety and environmental standards that prevail in the JPDA are equivalent or superior to those applying in Australian jurisdiction.

Australia's offshore petroleum industry operates under occupational health and safety and environment regulatory regimes that are among the world's strictest. It is the Government's intention that petroleum industry operations in the JPDA should meet those high standards, and it will seek to achieve this through its presence on the administrative agencies within the JPDA.