

MEDIA RELEASE  
Tuesday 11 February 2015

## TIMOR SEA JUSTICE CAMPAIGN

# Australia should welcome Timor's new PM with offer for permanent maritime boundaries

With Dr Rui Araujo expected to be sworn in next week as East Timor's new Prime Minister, Timor Sea Justice Campaigners are calling for Australia to mark the occasion by committing to a fresh approach to negotiations over oil and gas in the Timor Sea.

The Timor Sea Justice Campaign's spokesperson in Melbourne, Tom Clarke, said the Australian Prime Minister, Tony Abbott, should welcome Dr Araujo to the job with a phone call and an offer to immediately establish permanent and equitable maritime boundaries between the two nations.

"Let's face it, Tony Abbott is in serious need of a political win about now and giving East Timor a fair go would deliver one that has eluded the past seven Prime Ministers. He simply needs to draw a line half way between our two nations," said Mr Clarke.

Australia has consistently refused to establish permanent maritime boundaries with East Timor in accordance with international law. Instead it has jostled the second poorest nation in Asia into a series of temporary resource sharing agreements that short-change East Timor out of billions of dollars in gas and oil revenue.

In 2002, Australia withdrew its recognition of the maritime boundary jurisdiction of the International Court of Justice and the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea, depriving East Timor of a legal avenue to challenge Australia's unilateral depletion of contested gas and oil fields.

Mr Clarke said despite the decades of bitter haggling and underhanded tactics, the solution was tantalisingly simple and within easy reach of the Prime Minister.

"In such situations, international law overwhelmingly favours median line solutions. Put simply, it means draw a line halfway down the middle. If an oil field is on your side, it's yours. If it's on my side, it's mine. Simple and fair," said Mr Clarke.

Australia adopted such an approach when it negotiated with New Zealand to resolve overlapping claims off Norfolk Island in 2004.

"If he chose to, Tony Abbott could be the PM remembered for rising above the greed of previous Australian Governments and simply allowing East Timor to benefit from their own oil and gas. It's an easy fix and would be immensely popular, it would also be the right thing to do. Let's not forget that the Timorese are simply asking for what is theirs -- no more, or no less," Mr Clarke said.

---

*For further comments contact Tom Clarke on 0422 545 763.*

## Timor Sea Justice Campaign

The Timor Sea Justice Campaign is a grassroots community campaign calling on the Australian Government to establish fair and permanent maritime boundaries with East Timor in accordance with current international law.