

TIMOR SEA JUSTICE CAMPAIGN

A FAIR GO FOR EAST TIMOR



Timor Sea Justice Campaign News

Australian Government returns stolen documents to East Timor but still refuses to talk about maritime boundaries

Thursday, May 07, 2015

The Australian Government has decided to hand back the documents it dramatically seized from East Timor's lawyers 16 months ago, but has walked away from a perceived commitment to discuss the establishment of permanent maritime boundaries.

The Timor Sea Justice Campaign's spokesperson in Melbourne, Tom Clarke, said it was now clear that the Australian Government is not prepared to enter negotiations about maritime boundaries in good faith.

"It would seem that old habits die hard. Stonewalling, stalling, walking away from commitments and ultimately acting like a bully are well worn tactics that successive Australian Governments have repeatedly used to short-change East Timor from its fair share of oil and gas resources," said Mr Clarke.

The documents were seized in late 2013 just before arbitration in The Hague was to commence over allegations that Australia had spied on the tiny nation for financial gain by bugging the Timorese Government's cabinet room during negotiations over an oil and gas treaty.

In a provisional ruling in March 2014 the International Court of Justice ordered the Australian Government not to access the

documents and delivered an unprecedented rebuke, telling Australia to immediately stop interfering with East Timor's communications and not to use national security as an alibi for commercial espionage.

The case was put on hold in October 2014 to allow time to see if Australia and East Timor could reach an amicable settlement, but Australian Foreign Minister, Julie Bishop, this week denied **suggestions** that there was ever an agreement to discuss the underlying and far more important issue of maritime boundaries.

"As a sovereign nation East Timor has a right to permanent maritime boundaries, yet the Australian Government refuses to even discuss the possibility of establishing permanent boundaries. It's pretty petulant behaviour," said Mr Clarke.

Australia withdrew its recognition of the maritime boundary jurisdiction of the International Court of Justice just two months before East Timor became independent. Mr Clarke said this demonstrates that the Australian Government is not confident of its own legal arguments and is not acting in good faith.

"For a Government that talks a lot about sovereign borders, you'd think Australia would be willing to establish some between East Timor, but no, it's seemingly happy to continue short-changing the second poorest country in Asia out of billions of dollars in gas and oil revenue," said Mr Clarke.

For further information or comments, please contact Tom Clarke on 0422 545 763

Tweets



Tom Clarke

@TomHRLC

For a Gov that talks a lot about "sovereign borders" you'd think Aus would be willing to put some between us & #Timor timorseajustice.com/timor-sea-just...

Retweeted by Timor Sea Justice



Kim McGrath

@K1McG

"@australian: Australia 'broke its word' to East Timor bit.ly/1bRyRJF #auspol" #timor

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