

## Mark Skulley



## Aus govt defends status quo in Timor Sea

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The Turnbull government has confirmed that it will challenge the jurisdiction of the UN-sponsored conciliation commission on the disputed maritime boundary with Timor-Leste.

A joint statement was issued in Canberra today by the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Julie Bishop, and the Attorney-General George Brandis.

The announcement comes hours before Australia is due to participate in the first meeting of the Conciliation Commission proceedings brought by Timor-Leste under the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) in The Hague.

“We will deliver a statement explaining the background of the dispute between Australia and Timor-Leste, as well as our position on matters relating to the legal competence (jurisdiction) of the Commission,” the statement said.

“In line with our pre-existing, legally binding treaties, which are in full accordance with international law, we will argue that the Commission does not have jurisdiction to conduct hearings on maritime boundaries.”

“Australia will abide by the Commission’s finding as to whether it has jurisdiction to hear matters on maritime boundaries.”

“If the Commission ultimately finds that it does have jurisdiction to hear matters on maritime boundaries, then its final report on that matter is not binding.”

The Ministers said the statement to the conciliation commission would reaffirm Australia’s “principled commitment to upholding existing treaty obligations with Timor-Leste.”

“These have benefited both our countries, and enabled Timor-Leste to accumulate a Petroleum Fund worth more than \$16 billion, more than eight times its annual GDP.”

However, the Australian stance will not be accepted by Timor, which will give its opening statement to the proceedings later today.

Its main speaker will be former president, Xanana Gusmao.

Here’s link to the Aus govt statement:

[http://foreignminister.gov.au/releases/Pages/2016/jb\\_mr\\_160829c.aspx?w=tb1CaGp--kPX%2FIS0K%2Bg9ZKEg%3D%3D](http://foreignminister.gov.au/releases/Pages/2016/jb_mr_160829c.aspx?w=tb1CaGp--kPX%2FIS0K%2Bg9ZKEg%3D%3D) ([http://foreignminister.gov.au/releases/Pages/2016/jb\\_mr\\_160829c.aspx?w=tb1CaGp--kPX%2FIS0K%2Bg9ZKEg%3D%3D](http://foreignminister.gov.au/releases/Pages/2016/jb_mr_160829c.aspx?w=tb1CaGp--kPX%2FIS0K%2Bg9ZKEg%3D%3D))