Timor-Leste passes resolution calling for Australia to drop Bernard Collaery prosecution

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Timor-Leste’s parliament has passed a resolution calling for Australia to drop the prosecution of Bernard Collaery. The resolution, passed on Tuesday with cross-party support, also called for Witness K’s conviction to be quashed, according to local media.

Collaery, a former lawyer who represented intelligence officer Witness K, is facing potential jail time for his role in exposing a 2004 operation to bug the government offices of Timor-Leste during negotiations to carve up the resource-rich Timor Sea.

Alliance Against Political Prosecutions co-convenor Kathryn Kelly said the resolution was a “significant event”. Kelly said:

// It is clearly not in the national interest for the prosecution to continue if this is the Timor-Leste government’s view.

The development comes amid new claims that former Australian foreign affairs minister Alexander Downer privately boasted in 2000 that Timor was an “open book” to Australia. According to an affidavit filed by Philip Dorling, a former adviser to the shadow foreign affairs minister, Laurie Brereton, Downer said:

// You know. There’s not much back there [in Dili] we don’t know. We know what they’re saying about Laurie. They’re an open book to us.

Collaery’s case is also back before the ACT supreme court on Wednesday, where the parties are continuing to argue over secrecy issues. The attorney general, Michaelia Cash, wants to hand a judge super secret evidence, which Collaery himself would not be able to see, to justify why Collaery’s trial should be held partially behind closed doors.