

## **Friends of Maliana, Sydney NSW**

### **Why does the Australian Government treat Timor Leste differently to all other countries with which it has a maritime border?**

Australia has signed treaties all along its maritime boundaries based on the median line, the accepted international norm. Why does it treat Timor Leste differently?

Is it because the majority of the resources in the 'gap' are on the Timor Leste side of the median line? As the early negotiations in 2002 went on and CMATS was signed in 2006 it became apparent that by hook or by crook the Australian government wanted the resources on the Timor Leste side of the median line.

Even going to the extent of bugging the Timor Leste government offices during the treaty discussions; an espionage that was uncovered years after the CMATS was signed.

### **The Australian people owe the people of Timor Leste a big moral debt.**

The people of Timor Leste selflessly stood by Australia and its troops during the Second World War. The people of Timor leste ensured the Sparrow Force of Australia troops were fed, sheltered and protected during the Second World War. For this selfless support they were left high and dry, murdered in their thousands and later again left high and dry by Australia as the Indonesians invaded.

While the Australian government pursued policies that resulted in a terrible toll on the people of Timor Leste the people of Australia strongly supported the People of Timor Leste in their struggle for independence and continue to do so.

### **But Australia is doing the right thing and giving lots of aid to Timor Leste – isn't it?**

Let's do the sums on that. From 1999 to the present, Australia has given less than \$2 billion in aid and in the same period Australia has taken \$5 billion from oil and gas resources in Timor-Leste's part of the Timor Sea.

Pushing Timor Leste into being an aid dependent country is not in the interests of Australia, Timor Leste and it is certainly not morally or legally just to do this by trying to twist the internationally accepted processes for determining maritime boundaries.

The Australian government is also saying that it will share the resources – we will control and we will give you a cut. This of course is a form of colonialism.

### **Implying that Timor Leste is not up to managing its affairs**

The issue of the debate about the gas pipeline from Greater Sunrise to Timor-Leste's south coast to support the South Coast petroleum infrastructure project (Tasi Mane project) is often used by the Australian government to imply that giving Timor Leste its sovereign rights is a risk. The issue of sovereign rights and the maritime boundary is a separate issue to how the economic value of the resources is exploited. The debate around the Tasi Mane project continues in Timor Leste as the debate around electricity and gas economic arrangements continue in Australia. The difference is that no other country is telling us we should not have our resources because we are not good economic decision makers or managers. These two issues must be separated in the Inquiry.

The termination of the CMATS Treaty, which both parties announced in January 2017, is a positive step for Australia and we should take this opportunity to negotiate a legally just and respectful arrangement.

## Recommendations

Australia should:

1. Accept the median line principle for defining the Australia-Timor-Leste maritime boundary as it has with all other countries.
2. Respect Timor-Leste as a sovereign state, the same as other nations with which it has negotiated maritime borders.
3. consider Timor-Leste as a neighbour and a partner, not as a colony or incapable state
4. Enter into binding arbitration by an impartial third party.