

Your name, address and phone contact

Mr or Ms MP

Member for

Address(see *Australian Parliament House website for electorate address*)

Date.....

Request for a meeting concerning the Timor Sea maritime boundary

Dear

I write to request a meeting with you, as my Federal Representative, on the matter of the ongoing dispute in the Timor Sea between Australia and Timor-Leste (East Timor).

I believe it is essential for East Timor's progress and for Australia's integrity that a fair and permanent maritime border be speedily settled.

Please do not suggest that the recent decision to terminate the CMATS Treaty nor the pending decision of the Compulsory Conciliation, nor any determination or change in your Party's policy, makes a meeting with you unnecessary.

Many Australians feel a strong connection to the Timorese people, especially as a result of our shared World War II history. The Timorese proved loyal friends to our soldiers, a situation which cost them the lives of up to 60,000 people. Today many Australian groups and individuals work hard with the Timorese people for mutual benefit, expressing the strong bonds established over the years in a variety of historical events.

There have been examples of Australian support for the Timorese people over which we can all feel proud, but there are other examples of Australian decisions and actions which appear mercenary and unfair. I believe that the withdrawal of Australia from the international bodies overseeing maritime boundary disputes in 2002 put Timor-Leste at particular disadvantage, as did the alleged spying on Timorese negotiations a few years later.

As you may know, after many years of Australia's refusal to negotiate, in 2016, Timor-Leste launched proceedings in the United Nations for compulsory conciliation over the maritime boundary, under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. Australia has recently announced that it has agreed to negotiate in the Conciliation Commission for permanent maritime boundaries in the Timor Sea.

This is a very positive move, but it needs to be accompanied by a commitment to finalise the border quickly, based on the median line between the two countries. Current international practice is that the permanent border should be established according to median line principles, that is, halfway between the two coastlines. At the moment, Australia is claiming resources which are much closer to Timor-Leste than to Australia.

The report of the commissioners under the conciliation process is due in September 2017, but there is nothing to stop the nations reaching agreements before the commissioners' deadline. Instead of adding to both countries' expenses and prolonging the injustice of refusing to negotiate a fair border with Timor-Leste while

the conciliation takes its course, Australia should expedite an agreement as soon as possible.

Permanent boundaries will finalise the Timorese people's long and determined struggle to become an independent and sovereign nation. The resources thus gained would provide a significant income to the nation, currently the second poorest in Asia.

The Australian people are strong supporters of justice for Timor-Leste and they want this problem fixed. A ReachTEL poll of 10, 271 residents in August 2016 found the great majority want the Government to establish a permanent maritime boundary in the Timor Sea in accordance with current international law.

It is not only the Timorese who have rights in this regard: Australians have the right to a complete border, and at present there is nearly 2% of it missing, because Australian governments have not finalised it.

At our meeting I would like to ask how you might assist in the Australian Parliament and within your party to move this matter forward, to quickly finalise the border in accordance with current international law and practice. I believe that the Australian Parliament can exercise leadership on this question, and I believe that you have a part to play in that leadership, and therefore I wish to speak with you.

You may also have some advice on ways Australian civil society can influence decisions concerning the maritime boundary for the mutual good of Australia and Timor-Leste.

Perhaps you would ask your office to phone (.....) to let me know when you will be able to meet me.

For further information I would encourage you to visit <http://www.timfo.org> and <http://www.gfm.tl/>

Yours sincerely,