

Aussie, Aussie, Aussie, Oil, Oil, Oil.

Family members, workplace colleagues, newspaper columnists and others may confront us with the opinion that Australia has been 'generous' with Timor. Ordinary Australians have indeed shown remarkable generosity, but is that the case with official policy?

Read and share the following facts:

Australia did not support East Timor as Indonesia invaded on December 7, 1975. On the contrary, Australia's Ambassador to Jakarta, Richard Woolcott, advised that it would be easier for Australia to negotiate over the resources of the Timor Sea with Indonesia, rather than with Portugal or an independent East Timor. As the Indonesians advanced, he recommended that events be left 'to take their course'. He cabled:

"If and when Indonesia does intervene we should act in a way designed to minimise the public impact in Australia and show privately understanding to Indonesia of their problems. I know I am recommending a pragmatic rather than a principled stand but that is what national interest and foreign policy is all about."

Munster, G., & Walsh, R., (1980) Documents on Australian Defence and Foreign Policy 1968 – 1975. Munster & Walsh: Sydney

Australia, alone of all Western nations, gave *de facto* recognition of Indonesian sovereignty over East Timor in 1976 and *de jure* recognition in 1983.

During the early 1980s Australia constantly argued at the United Nations that East Timor be taken off its agenda. It was at this time that the Indonesian policy of politically induced starvation was having most success in East Timor.

The Apostolic Administrator in East Timor, Monsignor da Costa Lopes, visited Australia in 1982 and spoke of his anguish at the starvation. Little attention to him was paid by the media, the Catholic Church or the Government.

Australia and Indonesia signed the Timor Gap Treaty in 1989, halving the resources between them.

After the Dili Massacre in 1991, Australia's Foreign Minister Gareth Evans claimed that it was an 'aberration'.

Australia accepted General Mantiri as Indonesia's Ambassador in 1992, despite his remarks that the Dili Massacre had been a proper course of action for the Indonesian military to take. Pressure from ordinary Australians ensured that the appointment was overturned.

Nearly two thousand young Timorese claimed asylum in Australia after the massacre. Australia refused to process them, claiming they were Portuguese citizens. The High Court overturned the decision. Even so, some were kept waiting for 12 years before finally receiving residency.

After the Asian financial collapse and the fall of President Suharto in 1997 enormous public pressure was put on the Australian Government to support the Timorese desire for freedom. The Labor Party changed its platform to support the Timorese cause.

Prime Minister John Howard wrote to President Habibbi in December 1998 indicating that Australia favoured autonomy for East Timor within the Indonesian State, thus reversing public policy.

Australia joined with others in supporting the UN proposal for a referendum in 1999, although agreeing that Indonesia be responsible for security during the process.

After the ballot in which 78.5% of Timorese said they wanted to be free of Indonesia, two thousand Timorese were killed and all public infrastructure was destroyed. The Australian Foreign Minister said 'rogue elements' of the Indonesian military were responsible.

Australia led the International Force for East Timor (INTERFET) into East Timor in September 1999.

Australia re-negotiated the Timor Gap Treaty in 2002, after withdrawing from the two International adjudicating tribunals, thus leaving a demolished Timor-Leste to deal directly with Australia.

Don't forget: The whole Timor Sea dispute concerns resources on Timor's side of half-way.

Go to The Timor Sea Justice Campaign
<http://www.timorseajustice.com>

WRITING TO OUR REPRESENTATIVES

A signed letter which is handwritten or typed is the most effective means of communication other than a face to face meeting. It is more effective than photocopied form letters, postcards or emails. (However, they have their place.....)

- Include your name and address and keep the letter brief
- Use your own words where possible
- State the topic clearly, or include a subject line at the beginning of your letter
- Start with a clear statement of purpose, e.g. "I am concerned about...." or "I wish to bring your attention to....." etc.
- Focus on one or two points
- Ask a question, or ask a few questions
- Ask for a response to your letter
- Personalise your letter. Where possible, include a personal story and/or information on how the issue affects you, or people you know
- Be polite. Thanks is as important as criticism. Give credit where it is due.
- Send a copy of the letter to the recipient's 'opposite number', e.g. if you write to the Minister for Foreign Affairs, send it also to the Opposition Spokesperson for Foreign Affairs
- Follow up any response received. If your questions haven't been answered or the response is inadequate, write and say so, expecting another reply.

Your Federal Representative can be found at <http://www.aph.gov.au>

The Hon Tony Abbott MP
Prime Minister
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

The Hon Bill Shorten MP
Leader of the Opposition
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Senator The Hon George Brandis QC
Attorney-General
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

The Hon Mark Dreyfus QC
Shadow Attorney-General
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

All Representatives can be contacted at this address: Parliament House, Canberra ACT 2600

How we give aid

"Australia is the largest development partner for Timor-Leste. Since 1999, we have provided more than \$1 billion in humanitarian and development aid to Timor-Leste."

<http://aid.dfat.gov.au/countries/eastasia/timor-leste/Pages/how-aid.aspx>

This money includes direct Government assistance, however, when ordinary Australians make tax-deductible donations through groups, Churches and NGOs, the Government counts such tax measures in its tally of Australian aid.

Just how generous are we?

When oil companies exploit resources they pay a considerable variety of taxes to the Government of the nation which owns the resources. The Laminaria-Corallina oil field in the Timor Sea is twice as close to East Timor as to Australia. It lies completely in a disputed area, with both Australia and Timor-Leste claiming it.

The Woodside Petroleum website announces the field as "the A\$1.37 billion Laminaria-Corallina project..." It extracted just over 200 million barrels of oil since starting production in September 1999.

<http://www.woodside.com.au/our-business/australia-oil/pages/laminaria-corallina.aspx>

Australia has received all the tax revenue from this field. Timor-Leste has received nothing.

In truth, the only just way forward is to determine maritime boundaries between Australia and Timor-Leste according to international law and current practice.