



Nun calls on Abbott to fix E Timor dispute

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An Australian nun is calling on the Abbott government to finally settle the maritime border with East Timor so the tiny nation can get on with delivering basic services to its people.

Sister Susan Connelly is using the G20 to raise awareness of East Timor and Australia's maritime boundary dispute, joining with advocacy group Get Up to put a television advertisement to air during the summit.

The border has been the subject of a long-term dispute between the two countries and has never been officially drawn.

Instead, the countries have a resource sharing arrangement and Australia has profited from oil reserves close to East Timor's shore.

The tiny country has long argued Australian drillers are robbing it of the resources required to lift its population out of poverty.

Sr Connelly, who has spent 17 years working in East Timor and is part of the Timor Sea Justice Forum, is calling on the Abbott government to "start a new page" and negotiate with the Timorese government in good faith.

"Timor is a sovereign nation, no less sovereign than any other nation in the world even though it's small," she told AAP.

"They have rights, and one of those rights is that they should have a properly defined maritime boundary."

GDP in East Timor was just US\$1.6 billion last year, according to the World Bank.

The country faces extreme difficulties providing health and education services, with about half of its population aged under 18.

Sr Connelly says it's not fair that such a poor country should have to fight so hard to get what's on "their side of a halfway line".

"Timor really wants to make a go of it," she said.

"They don't want to beg ... they want to do it (develop) by themselves but they should not be denied the financial wherewithal to do it."

"They're wasting so much time and money on legal advice, and having people work ... to get what is rightfully theirs."