

**On 21 June 2016, Australia's Deputy Liberal leader (and Foreign Minister) Julie Bishop and deputy Labor leader (and shadow Foreign Minister) Tanya Plibersek debated at the National Press Club in Canberra ahead of the July 2 election.**

Here is a transcript of part discussing Timor-Leste

Plibersek:

It is important that Australia also abides by the whole of the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea and at the moment our dispute about the unsettled border between Australia and East Timor I think weakens our case to be taken seriously as a country that abides by these rules. We do in most part, in almost every respect we do, but I think this is an issue that our critics can point to and say "Well it is important that you don't just urge others to abide by the rules but that you also play by the rules yourself." Very helpful to us in our case against Japan on Japanese whaling, I think we could go one step further and really say that's in our interests, that is in the interests of global peace and prosperity that all countries abide fully by the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea.

Bishop:

If I could just pick up the Deputy Leaders on her reference to Timor-Leste – it is a shame that the Deputy Leader didn't avail herself of an expert detailed briefing on the reason why Australia has maintained its commitment to the existing treaty arrangements with Timor-Leste. Had she done so she would have come to the same conclusion as Bob Carr and Mark Dreyfus and that is we should maintain our commitment to the existing Timor-Leste treaties. They have undoubtedly been in Timor-Leste's interests as a result of being able to develop the JDP.

Timor has been able to build a sovereign wealth fund of about 16 billion dollars which is about eight times its current GDP and we will continue to support Timor-Leste. But it is a shame that this bipartisan policy of supporting our existing treaty arrangements that was signed in accordance with international law with Timor-Leste has been abandoned.

Plibersek:

Well I was briefed, I was briefed in East Timor when I went there and your Secretary of the Department had to correct the record in Senate Estimates about the fact that I hadn't been briefed, and I took extensive briefings not just from Government sources, but from a wide range of sources, we made a considered decision in our Shadow Cabinet processes, including through our National Security Sub Committee of the Shadow Cabinet.

We have decided that it is time for this issue to be settled. It's not that we want to change the border – there isn't a border, there is a gap in Australia's border. We believe it is more likely that the resources will be developed sometime in the future when there is certainty over this issue.

We've been taken back to court by East Timor now. You say that the treaty arrangements have provided certainty but apparently they haven't or we wouldn't be in court right now.

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*Both women were re-elected to Parliament on 2 July, but it remains unclear who will form the Government and whether they will continue in their respective positions.*