

# THE SATURDAY PAPER

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## THE BRIEFING

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WITH ALEX MCKINNON

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# Australia taps East Timor oil

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Timor-Leste advocates **have criticised** the Australian government for failing to ratify a maritime border treaty dividing offshore oil fields between the two nations. Last year, Australia and Timor-Leste **signed** a treaty demarcating rights to the Greater Sunrise oil and gas fields, but the federal government's failure to ratify the treaty in parliament has seen Australia siphon off tens of millions of dollars' worth of oil that would belong to Timor-Leste under the treaty's terms. Charles Scheiner, a spokesperson for Timor-Leste non-profit L'ao Hamutuk, claimed the foregone revenue would total more than US\$76 million by the time Australia's parliament next sat after the federal election, an amount that "would have covered the health costs of the entire Timorese population". Timor-Leste Governance Program director and former Victorian premier Steve Bracks told Guardian Australia on Tuesday that Timor-Leste was "being denied that money because of the dysfunction of the Australian government and its insistence that parliament needs to ratify the treaty".