

# A DISTURBING BOOK LAUNCH



Professor Clinton Fernandes' book "Island off the Coast of Asia" was launched by Bernard Collaery at Monte Sant' Angelo Mercy College on Saturday, 13 April, 2019. The Timor Sea Justice Forum organised the event, generously and hospitably assisted by College staff.

Nearly 200 people attended, including senior journalists, former diplomats and judges, long-term campaigners, interested citizens and members of the local Timorese community.

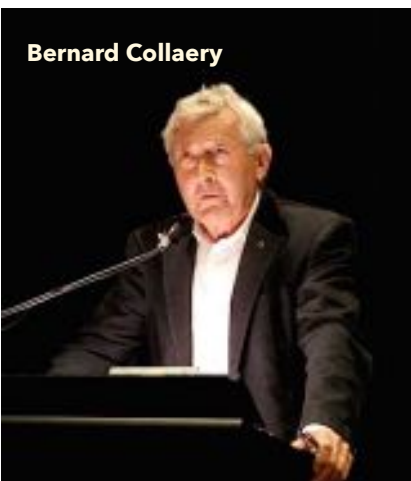
Susan Connelly acted as MC and invited Professor Fernandes to open the proceedings. He described how the Australian pursuit of national security is embedded in its economic interests which underpins the whole gamut of its global relationships. The Australian desire to remain secure equates to protecting the economic interests of powerful players and thus requires cooperation with and dependence on powerful nations which share similar economic interests. These facts receive detailed treatment in his book, a whole chapter of which is devoted to the relationship with East Timor (Timor-Leste) particularly concerning the oil and gas issues of the Timor Sea.



Two points which marvellously focused the attention of the audience and which are detailed in the book were:

1. The simultaneous use of Australian security services to investigate Islamist terrorism and spy on Timorese negotiators. The fact that Australia diverted resources and personnel away from the terrorist concerns of the early 2000s towards an operation for financial gain in Timor-Leste have raised major questions, especially when carried out under cover of a humanitarian project;

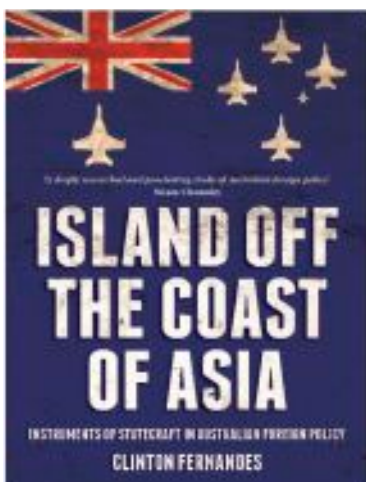
2. A comparison between Australian and Norwegian approaches to maritime resources. Australia's continental shelf was mapped at government expense and the findings handed over to oil and gas companies. The recompense to Australian coffers from one of the largest gas producing areas was \$27 billion between 1984-2017. The Australian public thus absorbed the costs and the risks, while corporations received the profits. The much smaller Norwegian maritime areas were mapped and mined by government-owned companies, netting the much smaller Norwegian nation 1.2 trillion dollars. Thus the people of Norway shouldered the costs and the risks, but also reaped the profits.



Bernard Collaery was then invited to launch the book. In an absorbing talk on matters which are all on the public record, he spoke of being charged by the government in relation to the alleged actions of his client Witness K concerning the 2004 Treaty negotiations with Timor-Leste. He alluded to some dilemmas posed in this situation to the lawyer/client relationship. He explained that his long experience dealing with substantial matters of trust does not sit well with the refusal of government to provide him with the brief of evidence against him.

Responses from the audience revealed astonishment at the conduct of the hearings which have been held so far. Questions from journalists and others drew further clarifications from Clinton and Bernard.

The enormity of the pressure on Bernard, his client and their families, and his livelihood became clear. Equally clear became the implications of this matter on the people of Australia. Serious concerns include the rule of law, the practice of law, the interpretation of "national security", the rights of citizens, the consequences of rushed legislation, the susceptibility of democracy to manipulation, and the protection of the privileged and the powerful. It became clear also that an economic fixation damaged the Australian relationship with Timor-Leste, and ignored the abiding importance of the shared history and geography of the two nations.



**Susan Connelly**



The Attorney-General has the power to discontinue the prosecution under s.71 of the  
Judiciary Act 1903.

[http://www5.austlii.edu.au/au/legis/cth/consol\\_act/ja1903112/s71.html](http://www5.austlii.edu.au/au/legis/cth/consol_act/ja1903112/s71.html)

Therefore, everyone is urged to lobby [Mark Dreyfus MP](#) in this parliamentary  
caretaker period.

"Island off the Coast of Asia" by Professor Clinton Fernandes is available from Monash  
University Press. <http://www.publishing.monash.edu/books/ioca-9781925523799.html>

It costs \$29.95, post free in Australia.

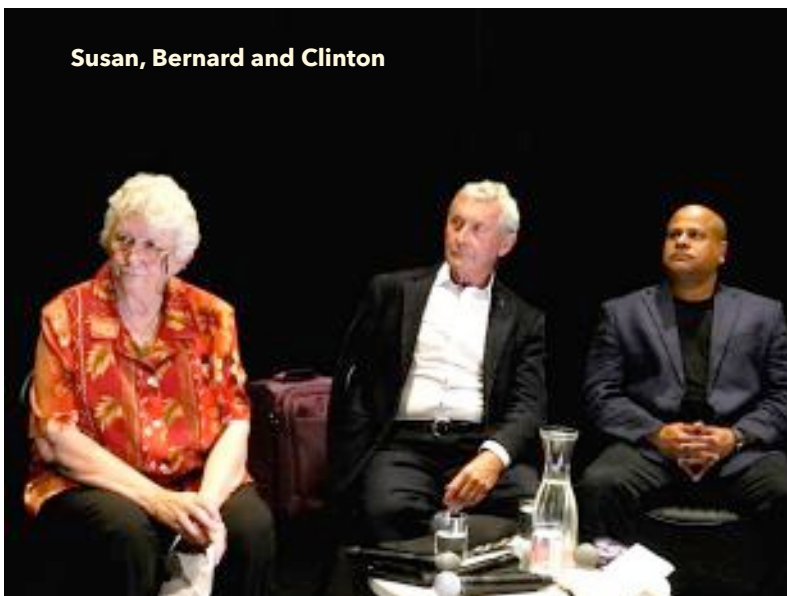
**Shirley Shackleton  
asking questions**



**Questions from Steve Cannane, one  
of the journalists following the case**



**Susan, Bernard and Clinton**



**Gil Scrine**



Gil Scrine is filming Clinton Fernandes' book "Reluctant Saviour", a study which presents a factual account  
of Australia's dubious role in Timor-Leste's independence. Go to this link to support and be informed.

[https://antidotefilms.com.au/reluctant-saviour/?doing\\_wp\\_cron=1554511929.0819530487060546875000](https://antidotefilms.com.au/reluctant-saviour/?doing_wp_cron=1554511929.0819530487060546875000)