

Dear West Papua Freedom Flotilla

I've been tracking your progress since the beginning of your odyssey at Lake Eyre, and noticed you stalled on Indonesia's south-eastern border, waiting, apparently, for permission to proceed to Merauke in West Papua. I recall the Indonesian government issued you that licence some months ago, but then retracted it. So now, a retraction of a retraction for the simple task of gifting the waters of an Aboriginal sacred site to our brothers, sisters, and neighbours in West Papua?

That the Aboriginal Nation handed these waters to the Federal Republic of West Papua during a *secret* meeting on the Indonesian-PNG border should not detract from the importance of a *public* ceremony in Merauke tomorrow. Indeed, having been outmanoeuvred by a few Melanesians in canoes, the coalition of Australian, Indonesian, and PNG governments should concede you all rights of passage and welcome. (Indonesia landed an extra rotation of three thousand troops and four patrol boats in Merauke, see *Merauke—Military and Police presence*, 10 Sept 2013, www.freedomflotillawestpapua.org; Australia inserted a platoon of ADF troops and Zodiacs on Daru Island – and thanks to an enterprising New Guinean there are also photos of that, see *Daru – Australian Defence Force Presence* 9 Sept 2013).

However, both these brittle old warhorses are still attempting to preclude your delivery of a bottle of water to West Papua, and West Papuans from escaping the yoke of a bastard colonial regime. Yesterday, ABC-TV News and Lateline megaphoned an audacious plan by the Indonesian government for two of its (government) corporations to buy controlling interests in 1.5 million hectares of grazing property in northern Australia. It was an appropriate tit-tat for Prime Minister Abbott's plan to spend \$20 million buying Indonesian fishing boats and paying Indonesian villagers for information about people smugglers. But it displaced news-time that you warriors deserved, with claims by the National Farmers Federation and NT Cattlemen's Association that even Indonesian money spent buying Australian farms could be a good commercial prospect! These guys should watch the ABC's *Inside Business* discussion about Indonesia as 'a commercial basket case' (<http://www.abc.net.au/insidebusiness/content/2013/s3782776.htm>). Or read, damn them, about doing business with them by American political scientist Michael Buehler (*False hope? Indonesia's Economic Miracle*, at <http://thediplomat.com/2013/02/05/a-false-hope-indonesias-economic-miracle/>). They could even lend ear to West Papuans educated in Java, like Jacob Rumbiak, who'll tell you that Indonesia has always wanted to expand – both to the east (PNG), and to the south (Australia). He might also warn them about Indonesian 'land care' and 'people care' and 'animal husbandry' and so on and so forth.

Go well, and God willing you success in your noble effort to revive the spirits of our brothers, sisters, and neighbours in West Papua.

Louise Byrne, Australia West Papua Assoc—Melbourne, 13 September 2013