



Australian Government
Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

6 June 2014

Mr Kim Sampson
Suite 1222
1 Queens Road
MELBOURNE VIC 3004

Dear Mr Sampson

Thank you for your letter dated 28 May 2014 about tensions in the South China Sea. I have been asked to reply on behalf of the Minister for Foreign Affairs, the Hon Julie Bishop MP.

The Australian Government is concerned by violent confrontations between Chinese and Vietnamese vessels, as expressed in a statement issued on 14 May (www.dfat.gov.au/media/releases/department/2014/dfat-release-20140514.html). We welcome Vietnam's efforts to restore calm following recent protests. Australia does not take a position on competing claims in the South China Sea, but has a legitimate interest in the maintenance of peace and stability, respect for international law, unimpeded trade and freedom of navigation.

On multiple occasions Australia has urged parties to exercise restraint, refrain from provocative actions that could escalate the situation and take steps to ease tensions. We continue to urge governments to resolve territorial disputes peacefully and in accordance with international law.

In a joint statement with the United States and Japan, Australia expressed strong opposition to the use of coercion or force to unilaterally alter the status quo in the East China and South China Seas. We continue to encourage China and ASEAN member countries to make early progress on a substantive code of conduct for the South China Sea.

I trust that this information is of assistance.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Justin Baguley', written over a white background.

Justin Baguley
Director
Vietnam and Cambodia Section