



**Parliament of Australia**

**Parliamentary Delegation  
to the  
Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste**

**28 October–1 November 2018**

Commonwealth of Australia 2019

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## **Members of the Delegation**

### **Leader of the Delegation**

Mr Ken O'Dowd MP  
Member for Flynn  
The Nationals

### **Delegates**

Ms Sharon Claydon MP  
Member for Newcastle  
Australian Labor Party

Senator Patrick Dodson  
Senator for Western Australia  
Australian Labor Party

Senator Rex Patrick  
Senator for South Australia  
Centre Alliance

### **Official**

Ms Shennia Spillane  
Delegation Secretary



## Delegation to Timor-Leste

The parliamentary delegation was in Timor-Leste from 28 October to 1 November 2018. The delegation spent three nights in the capital, Dili, and one night in Balibo town. During its travel out of Dili the delegation also visited various sites in Bobonaro and Liquica districts in the north-west of Timor-Leste, providing the opportunity to see aspects of Timorese life and work outside the capital, and to meet with people in some rural and regional communities.

The visit was the first by an Australian parliamentary delegation to Timor-Leste in 15 years, a time during which great change has taken place in Timor-Leste, and in its relations with Australia. The delegation sought a better understanding of current opportunities and challenges in Timor-Leste, and insights into how relations between our two countries—including economic and development cooperation, people-to-people links and friendship between our parliaments—might continue to grow and strengthen.

### The Australia–Timor-Leste relationship

As one of Australia’s closest neighbours, and the site of significant people-to-people contacts as well as historical and recent military engagement, Timor-Leste attracts strong Australian public interest, and our two countries share a close and friendly relationship.

At the government-to-government level, Australia is Timor-Leste’s largest development and security partner—contributing around 35 per cent of its foreign aid receipts—and Timor-Leste is the fourth-largest recipient of Australia’s development assistance, currently amounting to approximately \$92 million per year. Education ties are strong and employment connections are growing, particularly through Timor-Leste’s participation in Australia’s Seasonal Worker

Program. These issues are discussed in more detail below.

Bilateral trade remains fairly limited, at \$223 million in 2017. While the trade balance is strongly in Australia’s favour, Australia is Timor-Leste’s third largest export destination, accounting for just over 10 per cent of its annual exports; and its fifth largest source of imports.

### *Oil, gas and maritime boundaries*

Negotiations over maritime boundaries in the Timor Sea, and the related development of oil and gas resources there, have long been a source of difficulty dominating the bilateral relationship. However, in March 2018 Australia and Timor-Leste signed a new treaty, agreeing for the first time on a permanent maritime boundary.<sup>1</sup> The treaty is seen by both countries as a turning point in our relations.



*Delegation leader Mr Ken O’Dowd MP speaks to local media during the visit*

The governments of Australia and Timor-Leste are both committed to ratifying the treaty as soon as practicable, and in the delegation’s discussions, representatives of both government and non-government sectors in

<sup>1</sup> *Treaty between Australia and the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste establishing their Maritime Boundaries in the Timor Sea*, done at New York on 6 March 2018.

Timor-Leste urged Australia to ratify it without delay. In addition to both countries completing their domestic ratification processes, this requires the completion of transitional arrangements for the oil and gas companies whose interests are affected by the treaty.

The governments of Australia and Timor-Leste agreed in the maritime boundary treaty that no compensation claim would be payable for past exploitation of the petroleum resources in the Timor Sea. However, some non-government organisations in Timor-Leste have urged Australia to voluntarily compensate Timor-Leste for the revenue Australia previously derived from resources extracted in areas now within Timor-Leste's maritime boundary. La'ó Hamutuk, which conducts analysis of economic and social issues in Timor-Leste, expressed the view to delegation members that Australia should 'reimburse' Timor-Leste for the revenues that flowed to Australia under previous arrangements.

### ***Post-treaty relations***

During the delegation's visit, representatives of Timor-Leste's government and Parliament spoke positively about the visit by former Foreign Minister Julie Bishop in July 2018, and the commitment made by both countries to a 'new chapter' in the bilateral relationship, with strengthened ties and deeper collaboration. The delegation's visit also followed shortly after the first Senior Officials' Meeting between Australia and Timor-Leste in mid-October 2018. The two countries have agreed to hold foreign ministers' and senior officials' meetings annually from now on.

As a new nation, Timor-Leste is seeking to enhance its participation in the global community through membership of relevant regional and international organisations, including the World Trade Organisation, Commonwealth of Nations, and Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN). The

Australian Government supports Timor-Leste's bids for membership of these organisations.

The delegation met with HE Fidelis Magalhaes, Minister for Legislative Reform and Parliamentary Affairs. Minister Fidelis strongly advocated nurturing the positive relations between Timor-Leste and Australia in various sectors. In addition to continuing successful bilateral cooperation schemes such as scholarships and seasonal workers, he believed in particular that Timor-Leste could benefit from Australian investment and expertise in science, technology and communications. Moreover, the minister believed that increased access to Australia's English-language and highly developed media and communications sectors could be a positive influence in Timor-Leste.



*(L-R) Senator Pat Dodson; Senator Rex Patrick; delegation leader Mr Ken O'Dowd MP; HE Fidelis Magalhaes, Minister of State for Legislative Reform and Parliamentary Affairs; Ms Sharon Claydon MP and Australian Ambassador Mr Peter Roberts OAM*

### **Timor-Leste's emerging economy**

The Timorese economy is based strongly on revenue from oil and gas royalties, currently earning between US \$700 million and US \$1 billion per year, with the country's petroleum trust fund holding approximately US \$16 billion.<sup>2</sup> Remittances from Timorese

<sup>2</sup> Based upon IMF figures as at December 2017: <https://www.imf.org/en/News/Articles/2017/12/06/pr17464-imf-board-concludes-2017-article-iv-consultation-with-the-democratic-republic-of-timor-leste>. Capacity to

workers overseas has recently grown to be the second-biggest source of revenue (approximately US \$19 million), followed by coffee (US \$12 million), but these and other exports such as tourism are significantly smaller elements in the economic mix. Only around 30 per cent of Timor-Leste's population works in the formal economy, and few of those are taxed. Private sector investment remains low.

A consistent theme heard by the delegation in discussions about Timor-Leste's economic situation was the danger of this strong reliance on oil and gas revenue—given the finite nature of that resource, the limited local opportunities it offers, and significant uncertainties about future exploitation—and the need to diversify the economy.

Timor-Leste is also experiencing a 'youth bulge', with 74 per cent of the population aged under 35, including 39 per cent under 15. Each year more than 30,000 citizens reach working age, while only about 4000 new jobs are created. Some statistics indicate that employment opportunities are actually decreasing.

Diversifying the economy and generating employment for this large and growing cohort of young people is a significant challenge, strongly linked to Timor-Leste's overall economic development and prospects for future prosperity. Development of the local agriculture, manufacturing and services sectors in which young people can find work—or succeed as entrepreneurs—needs to be a priority for Timor-Leste.

In a roundtable attended by the delegation, young policy leaders emphasised the importance of understanding the links between the employment challenge and broader issues facing young people, including poor health and education outcomes, and

(often intergenerational) social circumstances such as inadequate family planning. On the other hand, one speaker urged policymakers to consider the country's young population as a potential asset rather than a problem, and focus on how best to take advantage of it.

Minister Fidelis Magalhaes identified the need to develop a local manufacturing sector in Timor-Leste. Private investment from Australia could help significantly in this regard, but the minister noted the pressing need for reform of Timor-Leste's laws and processes to encourage investment and make it easier to do business.

Improving communications infrastructure was also identified as a significant need, to support future economic growth in Timor-Leste. In this respect some interlocutors noted Australia's recent agreement to fund an undersea internet cable between Australia, Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands, and observed that extending such a project to Timor-Leste would be a very practical investment in its future economic growth.

## **Reconciliation**

Timor-Leste continues to come to terms with the legacy of its violent and traumatic recent history. The delegation visited the Chega! National Centre (CNC), based in a former prison, which now houses the results of the Commission for Reception, Truth and Reconciliation (CAVR) and an exhibition about the human rights abuses in Timor-Leste between 1974 and 1999 documented by the Commission. The Commission estimated that a minimum of 102,800 civilians died due to conflict-related causes during the Indonesian occupation, although the exact number is impossible to determine and others have

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produce accurate and timely economic data remains a challenge in Timor-Leste.

estimated that there may have been up to twice as many deaths.<sup>3</sup>

The delegation met with Executive Director Mr Hugo Fernandes and board members of the CNC, which was established in 2015 to implement the 204 recommendations of the 2005 CAVR report, and those of the 2008 Indonesia-Timor-Leste Commission of Truth and Friendship (CTF). The centre preserves the memory of Timor-Leste's recent history, promotes human rights through education and training, and works towards a culture of peace and preventing the recurrence of human rights violations.

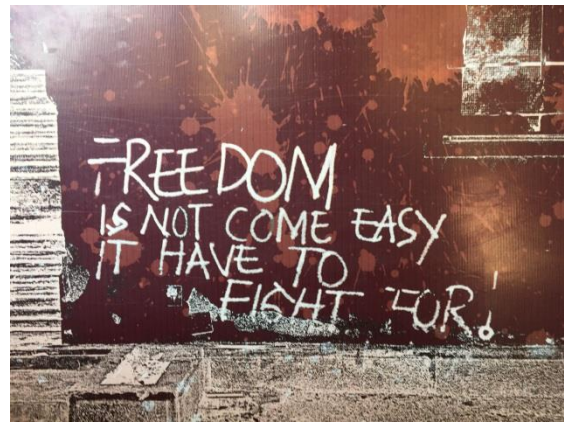


*The delegation talks with CNC Board members at the Chega! exhibition*

Mr Fernandes advised the delegation that Chega! was fully funded by the Government of Timor-Leste, but faced challenges particularly in relation to human resources, and archiving facilities. He also noted that a lack of Timorese students undertaking tertiary studies in history and archiving was likely to threaten the future viability of the CNC.

Throughout our visit, the delegation was consistently impressed by the positivity and resilience of the Timorese people. The sacrifices they made to achieve their nationhood are immense, and their determination to reconcile with their past and make their nation a success demands Australia's full support.

<sup>3</sup> See *Chega! A Plain Guide*, November 2013, at <http://www.chegareport.net/download-chega-products-2/>, pp. 14-16.



CNC board member Ms Galuh Wandita presented the delegation with a copy of her book *Stolen: A journey home in photographs and memories*, which bears witness to the thousands of East Timorese children who, between 1975 and 1999, were forcibly taken from their families and sent to Indonesia.

CAVR estimated that some 4,000 children were taken from their families and sent to Indonesia during the occupation. The forced removal of children was a practice sanctioned by the military and civilian authorities, involving individuals and later, military and religious institutions, which facilitated this process. In Indonesia, few were lucky enough to be cared for by loving families, raised and educated as Indonesians. Some found their way back home, against all odds. But many others were abused or abandoned and forced to fend for themselves. The majority did not have the opportunity to go to school and had to work hard to survive on their own. Most importantly, many were not orphans and continued to be sought by their family members.

As Timor-Leste approaches the 20th anniversary of the 1999 referendum, calls are growing for the governments of Timor-Leste and Indonesia to implement the recommendations of CAVR and CTF as they relate to the situation of the stolen children. Efforts to locate and reunite stolen children with their families remain a priority and must be supported by both governments and the international community, as should pathways



to help stolen children rebuild their lives in Timor-Leste, Indonesia or indeed both nations.

### **Australia's development cooperation**

During our visit the delegation was able to discuss Australia's development partnerships in Timor-Leste with Australian and Timorese stakeholders, and also see firsthand a number of development projects supported by Australian aid.

### **Seasonal Worker Program**

In 2012 Timor-Leste joined Australia's Seasonal Worker Program (SWP), which provides for selected workers to undertake designated seasonal employment in Australia for up to seven months at a time. Timor-Leste's involvement in the program has grown rapidly since then, and it is now the third-biggest source of participants.



*The delegation, Ambassador Roberts and Australian Defence Cooperation Program Senior Adviser Lt Col Dan Gosling with manager Luisa at the Balibo Fort Hotel*

During its visit the delegation was able to meet some Timorese workers who had participated in the SWP and returned to establish successful careers and businesses in Timor-Leste. In Balibo, the delegation stayed in the Balibo Fort Hotel, a renovation of the 300-year-old Portuguese fort (also used as an Australian military base during the International Force East Timor (INTERFET) deployment in 1999), now operating as a social enterprise providing employment and training in hospitality to 20 local people. The

hotel was managed by SWP alumna Luisa, who gained relevant skills and experience working in hospitality in Australia.

In Dili, the delegation enjoyed (excellent) coffee at the Black Box café, where we met with owner Nuno Ridenio, who worked for four seasons between 2012 and 2015 in the hospitality industry in Broome under the SWP. Nuno was able to use the training, experience and funds he gained from the SWP to establish his own cold-brew coffee business in Dili, first as a roadside coffee cart, then opening his own café and bar.

As well as winning awards for his business success, Nuno now volunteers as a small business mentor and co-facilitates a support network for other young entrepreneurs in Dili.

Nuno makes his coffee from high-quality organic coffee beans purchased from Mariano da Costa Alves (known as Ameta), another SWP alumnus who returned from farm work in Australia in 2016 to establish a coffee processing enterprise in his local community. Ameta is now a leader and award-winner in the Timorese coffee industry.



*The delegation enjoys coffee with Nuno and Ameta at the Black Box café*

Nuno and Ameta told the delegation that while the income they made allowed them to send financial help to their families from Australia and kick-start their businesses on return, the training and experience they gained were also crucial to their business

success after the program. Ameta said that his experience on a mango farm in Darwin, although not directly in the coffee industry, gave him valuable ideas and insights into agricultural techniques that helped improve his local coffee growing process.



*The delegation and Ambassador Roberts with Nuno, Ameta and staff at the Black Box café*

Representatives of the Government of Timor-Leste and returned SWP participants all spoke very positively about the program and the benefits it provides to individual families and communities, and to the broader economy. Australia and Timor-Leste hope to double the number of Timorese participants in the SWP in coming years.

The delegation discussed the terms and conditions of SWP employment in Australia, noting that there must be fair conditions of work and no tolerance for exploitation of workers under the program. Those participants with whom the delegation spoke considered that they had been fairly paid on the SWP, and given appropriate training and experience. Participants also noted the importance of social support provided by the Australian Timorese community, and local church and community groups.

SWP alumni did draw our attention to the high costs of international money transfer as an ongoing problem for workers seeking to send remittances home to their families while on the program.

### **Australia Awards**

During its visit the delegation met with a number of Timorese alumni of Australia Awards scholarships for tertiary study at Australian universities. The Australia Awards have supported 280 Timorese students to date, with 54 studying in Australia in 2018.

Australia Awards alumni include several ministers in the current government of Timor-Leste, as well as other senior and influential leaders in Parliament, civil service, business and academia. Importantly, these include a strong representation of women. The delegation was able to discuss issues relevant to both countries at a morning tea held with a group of the alumni, finding them articulate and thoughtful interlocutors, committed to the future of their country and to its friendly relations with Australia. The alumni universally expressed support for the program and the opportunity it had provided to them.



*The delegation with Australia Awards alumni*

In recent years the Australia Awards program has moved to supporting (only) postgraduate studies in Australia. Some past awards recipients and others expressed the view that the Awards could provide greater benefit to Timor-Leste if the opportunity was also provided for undergraduate students. It was noted that Australia Awards scholarships are offered to undergraduates from some other countries.

### **Rural development**

Around 70 per cent of Timor-Leste's population lives in rural areas. Basic infrastructure remains poor, and limits rural communities' access to markets and services, including health and education. There are few jobs or economic opportunities. Extreme wet and dry seasons, and the environmental consequences of conflict and deforestation, exacerbate difficult conditions for subsistence and development in rural areas.

The delegation visited a number of rural development projects supported by Australia in Bobonaro district in the west of Timor-Leste.

In the village (suku) of Odomau, the delegation saw a clean water project undertaken by the community with funding from the Government of Timor-Leste under its National Village Development Program (known by its Tetun-language acronym PNDS).

Under the program, communities are granted a set amount of funds per year to use for a small-scale infrastructure project of their choosing. Community ownership and leadership is central to the program. Australia supports the program by funding assistance in the form of planning, financial, social and technical expertise to advise and support the communities undertaking the projects.



*Community members and project staff with the delegation at Suku Odomau, with one of the taps installed under the PNDS clean water project*

In 2016 the community at Suku Odomau decided to prioritise access to clean water in five villages where people had previously needed to walk a long way to obtain fresh water from a river or spring. For a total cost of US \$13,000, a water tank, almost 3km of gravity-fed pipeline and five taps were installed, providing clean water to approximately 90 households.



*Ambassador Roberts and delegation leader Ken O'Dowd MP test the water at Suku Odomau*

The delegation heard from community members in Suku Odomau that the provision of clean water in the villages had had an enormous impact on residents' daily lives, as well as building skills and resilience within the community.

Community members were already looking ahead to future projects, and were anxious that the Government of Timor-Leste continue to fund the PNDS program. They urged the Australian Government to continue its technical support for the PNDS.

The delegation was told that water and sanitation is the most popular choice for the village development program, so far

accounting for some 40 per cent of all PNDS projects across Timor-Leste.

During our visit we observed local people in rural areas, including children, carrying water long distances along the road from rivers or streams to their homes. This highlighted the importance of supporting and extending programs to provide communities with ready access to clean water.

Another rural development program visited by the delegation was the rehabilitation of 17km of road between Maliana and Saburai, close to Timor-Leste's western border with Indonesia. Australia is the largest donor supporting the Government of Timor-Leste to plan, budget and contract rural road works through the 'Roads for Development' (R4D) program. Local contractors then employ members of the communities along the road to undertake the work.

The delegation was impressed by the hard labour of manual road construction being undertaken by local men and women along a very challenging stretch of road. The road was rehabilitated using a number of different surfaces, targeted to the terrain and needs of particular sections, and designed so that local people could maintain it to the greatest extent possible without outside expertise or heavy machinery. The delegation heard that the road was an important passage to and from markets and towns for the people in five villages, and that prior to its rehabilitation, that section of road had been all-but impassable during the wet season.

It was pleasing to learn that in its five years of operation, the Maliana-Saburai road project had provided temporary employment to 2206 men and 1471 women in the communities along the road, passing over US \$919,000 in wages—as well as new skills—to local people.



*Rehabilitation of the Maliana-Saburai road*

Finally, the delegation visited a salt farm at Surilaran, Atabae, operating with support from the Market Development Facility (MDF), a multi-country private sector development program. MDF supports private sector businesses to provide market opportunities which will in turn facilitate employment and enterprise in local communities.

At the Surilaran salt farm, local salt production had been supplemented by the establishment of a cooperative to produce iodized salt for purchase by private company NPM Industries. The work was shared among community members and profits were divided in proportion to the time worked by each.

The delegation heard that the cooperative, employing 55 women and seven men, had made around US \$30,000 since 2016 selling raw salt to NPM to process and sell in Timor-Leste. In turn, through this and other local farms, NPM's local product had built a 50 per cent share of the domestic market,

successfully competing with imported iodized salt from Indonesia.

The delegation noted that the cooperative obtained a fixed price for its salt from NPM, which was the sole commercial producer in Timor-Leste. We emphasise the importance in such circumstances of ensuring that initiatives are structured in such a way as to provide fair returns and avoid the potential for exploitation of local workers.

Members of the cooperative also raised with the delegation their need for a secure shed to store the salt while awaiting collection, to better protect it from the elements and enable them to increase production.



*Ambassador Roberts and Senator Rex Patrick taste locally-produced salt at Surilaran, Atabae*

MDF advised the delegation that it was also working to develop other community enterprises in Timor-Leste through connections to private sector opportunities, including in agriculture, fisheries, coffee and manufacturing, although the latter remained challenging.

The challenges facing Timor-Leste in bringing its rural communities out of poverty are significant. The delegation was pleased to see the support of Australia for the Timor-Leste Government's initiatives to improve basic

infrastructure and economic opportunities for rural people in Timor-Leste. We encourage the continuation of this kind of Australian aid.

### ***Education – Liquica Secondary School***

With its large and growing youth population, supporting high-quality education is a significant challenge and an issue of key importance in Timor-Leste. The delegation visited Liquica Secondary School in Liquica district, about 45 minutes' drive west of Dili. Australia has supported efforts there aimed particularly at keeping girls in school.

The delegation observed a classroom session on sexual health, conducted by a specialist educator supported by Marie Stopes International (MSI). Representatives of MSI explained that an important element of its work was to break taboos around menstruation and sexuality among young people. In addition to educational activities, MSI's work in Timor-Leste includes distribution of menstrual products, a clinic in Dili and a youth hotline.



*The delegation and Ambassador Roberts are welcomed to Liquica Secondary School*

The delegation also saw a toilet block installed at the school in partnership with WaterAid—for all students to use, but particularly intended to prevent girls missing school while menstruating.

The principal of the school, Mr Antonio Nunes, welcomed the assistance provided through these programs.

More generally, Mr Nunes observed that this was the only public high school in Liquica, and had grown rapidly since it was established in 1993, from less than 100 students to almost 1900 across two campuses today. Individual classes sometimes had up to 100 students, and the principal emphasised the need for more classrooms so that class sizes could be reduced.



*The delegation observing a reproductive health class in progress at Liquica Secondary School*

During our visit we observed that facilities at the school remained basic. There was an evident need for improvements such as measures for temperature and dust control, and upgrading classroom and playground facilities.

### ***Violence against women***

The delegation heard that the occurrence of family violence is very high in Timor-Leste: recent research indicates that 59 per cent of Timorese women who have ever been in a relationship have experienced family violence, and 46 per cent of women have been subject to violence within the last 12 months. Moreover, 75 per cent of victims' children have also suffered some form of abuse.

The delegation met with a group of non-government partners implementing 'Nabilan', an eight-year program (2014-2022) working to reduce the proportion of women who

experience family violence, and improve wellbeing for women and children affected by it. The program is coordinated by The Asia Foundation, with significant Australian Government support.

Activities undertaken by the Nabilan partners range from safe accommodation for victims of violence with medical and economic support, to legal advice and counsel, and prevention activities including media campaigns and community education.

The Nabilan groups told the delegation that significant social and legal barriers remained to overcoming violence against women. These included the absence of access to any form of apprehended violence orders under Timorese law, and entrenched social attitudes about gender relations and family violence.

### **Legal and justice sector reform**

Minister Fidelis Magalhaes told the delegation about the significant challenges facing Timor-Leste in reforming its legislative and justice sector arrangements. He said that law reform was essential both to protect and advance citizens' rights, and to create an environment that would encourage and facilitate investment.

The minister outlined the work being done by his department to standardise and streamline Timor-Leste's overloaded statute book, and to strengthen the court system.

During its visit the delegation also discussed other challenges facing the legal and justice system in Timor-Leste, including the fraught issue of land law and land titles. Representatives of the non-government sector noted that although Timor-Leste had enacted a new law to try and resolve the legacy of overlapping and competing titles and the dispossession of local people during the Portuguese and Indonesian occupations, the law had not yet been fully implemented and it was often difficult for rural people to

reclaim or enforce their traditional ownership of land.

The delegation also discussed work under way in Timor-Leste to integrate and recognise traditional justice systems, used for the resolution of minor disputes at the local level, with the formal justice system (based on the Portuguese civil law model).

### Parliamentary relations

Despite significant differences between the Australian parliamentary system and the unicameral, semi-presidential system in Timor-Leste, parliamentary links between Australia and Timor-Leste are strong and growing.

The delegation visited the Parliament of Timor-Leste, and observed a 'Plenary Session'. The Parliament meets in Plenary Session every Monday and Tuesday to consider motions and bills. During the delegation's visit the major item before Parliament was the 2019 national Budget.



*Timor-Leste's National Parliament in Plenary Session, 29 October 2018*

The delegation was also able to meet with the President of the National Parliament, HE Arao Noe Amaral. The President was joined in the meeting by the two Vice-Presidents of Parliament and other parliamentary office-holders. The President and Vice-Presidents expressed their enthusiasm for more contact

and information-sharing between our parliaments.



*Delegation leader Mr Ken O'Dowd MP with HE Arao Noe Amaral, President of the National Parliament*

One important area of interest to the delegation was cooperation between women in our respective parliaments. The delegation noted the impressive record of Timor-Leste in encouraging women's representation in Parliament. Timor-Leste's electoral law requires that women constitute one third of the candidates nominated by each party, and under Timor-Leste's party list-based voting system, this has resulted in women consistently making up almost 40 per cent of the national parliament's membership since independence.

The delegation met with Timor-Leste's large and enthusiastic cross-party Women's Parliamentary Group, GMPTL. The objectives of the group include promoting women's representation and participation in national politics, and sharing best practices on questions of gender and fighting discrimination.

The delegation discussed with GMPTL some shared challenges for both parliaments in this regard, such as incorporating gender sensitivity into budgets and budget analysis;

and promoting an inclusive legislative agenda on issues affecting women, children and other vulnerable people.



*The delegation meeting with the Parliamentary Women's Group (GMPTL)*

Members of GMPTL emphasised that women parliamentarians must be united to achieve change, both across party lines and between countries.



*Ms Sharon Claydon MP with Isabel Maria B Freitas Ximenes MP, Vice-Secretary of the National Parliament (left) and Lidia Norberta dos Santos Martins MP, President of GMPTL*

During her visit to Timor-Leste in July 2018, former Foreign Minister Julie Bishop committed Australia to establishing a mentoring program between women Members of Parliament in our two countries. GMPTL members strongly supported this

initiative, noting that members in both countries could learn from each other. They advised that it would be important to recognise cultural differences between Australia and Timor-Leste in designing an effective program.

The initiative is still in the early stages of development but the delegation joins GMPTL members in welcoming and encouraging the development of genuine partnerships between women parliamentarians in Australia and Timor-Leste.

More generally, the delegation noted the existence of bilateral friendship groups between our two countries in both parliaments, and encouraged greater contact between them.

A proposal was raised with the delegation about the forthcoming 20-year anniversary of Timor-Leste's independence, on 30 August 2019—and by extension, of the Australian-led INTERFET deployment in Timor-Leste. It was suggested that the Australian Parliament consider hosting an appropriate event in Parliament House during 2019 to commemorate these anniversaries. The delegation considers that this idea should be further explored, perhaps under the aegis of the Australian Parliament's Timor-Leste friendship group.

### **Cultural and people-to-people links**

The delegation was struck by the strength of warm feeling towards Australia expressed by Timorese people we met from all walks of life, and the strong historical and contemporary people-to-people links between our two countries.

Balibo, in particular, provided a moving example of the shared history and enduring links between Australia and Timor-Leste. The delegation visited Balibo House, the famous last refuge of five Australian-based journalists



murdered in Balibo during the Indonesian invasion in October 1975.



*Ms Sharon Claydon MP at Balibo House*

Following the establishment of the Balibo House Trust by the Victorian Government, with support from television channels 7 and 9, World Vision and others, Balibo House was restored and opened in 2003. It operates as a museum honouring the memory of the 'Balibo five', as well as Roger East, another Australian journalist executed in Dili on 8 December 1975, and also those Timorese killed in Balibo during the independence struggle of 1999. The Balibo House Trust is also engaged with the social enterprise partnership at the Balibo Fort Hotel, and supports a dental clinic established in Balibo House, the Balibo Community Learning Centre and other projects.



*Ms Sharon Claydon MP, Lt Col Dan Gosling, Senator Pat Dodson and Senator Rex Patrick at the Australian military memorial in Balibo, with Balibo Fort in the background*

The delegation also visited memorials to the Australian and Timorese soldiers who served in Balibo during Timor-Leste's struggle for independence.

In addition, the delegation attended a free outdoor screening in Balibo town of the Australian film 'Paper Planes', dubbed into Tetun language with English subtitles. The film was screened by Cinema Lorosae, an Australian initiative which has provided community film screenings in public spaces throughout Timor-Leste since 2011. The screenings are preceded by relevant community content, and often also provide an opportunity for local traders to offer their wares to cinema-goers. The engagement of local people, particularly children, with the film was heart-warming.



In his discussion with the delegation Minister Fidelis Magalhaes noted the significant people-to-people links between our two countries, including a number of marriages between Timorese and Australians. He believed that one element of nurturing that relationship was through promoting more coverage of news and information about Timor-Leste in the Australian media.

Some interlocutors in Timor-Leste also mentioned an extensive 'sister city' program between various towns in Timor-Leste and Australia.

The delegation considers it important to keep Timor-Leste in the Australian public eye going forward, so that the strong bond and spirit of friendship between our two countries is nurtured and maintained.

### **Acknowledgements**

The delegation sincerely thanks all of the many people in Timor-Leste who offered us a warm welcome and generously gave their time to share their experiences and perspectives with us.

The delegation also expresses its appreciation to Peter Roberts OAM, Australia's Ambassador to Timor-Leste, and Second Secretary Ms Carolyn Skorupa, for their excellent facilitation of the delegation's program. We extend those thanks to the many other Australian Embassy staff who supported the visit in various ways, not least the drivers who carried us safely and cheerfully over some difficult roads. The delegation further acknowledges the assistance of Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade staff in Canberra who helped arrange the visit and provided us with pre-departure briefing.

Finally, the delegation thanks Ms Onu Palm from the International and Parliamentary Relations Office, who coordinated arrangements for the visit.

*Mr Ken O'Dowd MP  
Delegation Leader*

### **ADDITIONAL COMMENTS FROM SENATOR REX PATRICK**

I thank the International and Parliamentary Relations Office, DFAT and the Australian Embassy staff in Dili for their organisational input and logistic assistance to the delegation.

I am in agreement with the delegation report. However, during the stay in Timor-Leste the delegation members were given the opportunity to meet independently with organisations and other officials. I embraced this opportunity and provide details of what I discussed and learned.

For the avoidance of doubt, no assumption should be made as to whether others in the delegation know of what I record here or whether they share any of my views.

#### **Movimento Kontra Okupasan Tasi Timor**

I met with members of the grassroots civil society group known as the Movement Against the Occupation of the Timor Sea (known by its Tetum acronym MKOTT, or *Movimento Kontra Okupasan Tasi Timor*).

MKOTT was formed in Dili just before the April 2004 treaty negotiations between Australia and Timor-Leste. Its founding statement called on Australia to negotiate a maritime boundary based on a median line between the two countries, to stop issuing new exploration licenses in seabed territory that were closer to East Timor than to Australia, and to deposit all revenues from Laminaria-Corallina and other petroleum fields that are closer to East Timor into an escrow account, to be divided appropriately when a permanent seabed boundary was established. Had the Australian government heeded these calls, much damage to Australia's reputation – to say nothing of revenues denied to the Timorese – could have been avoided.

MKOTT is an important player in Timor-Leste's vibrant civil society scene. They were able to attract as many as 50,000 people to their rallies. There is ample evidence of their strong grassroots support in photos of their demonstrations circulating on social media.

It is noted that they were able to deliver, with only three days' notice, a 10-metre-long banner covered with the signatures of 1300 Timorese to the Australian embassy in Dili on 16 September 2018. The banner was an act of protest at the Australian government's prosecution of Australian lawyer Bernard Collaery and his client, the former Australian Secret Intelligence Service officer known as Witness K, for allegedly exposing the 2004 bugging of Timor-Leste Cabinet offices.

MKOTT acknowledged that things are better now than they were prior to the new treaty being signed. None the less, they also express the following concerns/views:

- Although the Timor Treaty says that no compensation is payable for past exploitation of the petroleum resources in the Timor Sea, they believed Australia should voluntarily compensate Timor-Leste.
- There is a need for enabling legislation to bring into effect the full potential of the Timor Treaty. Australia should examine ways in which it could assist with this.
- There is still uncertainty over the east-west sea boundaries with Indonesia.
- They still have concerns over Australia having jurisdiction over Laminaria and Corallina oil and gas fields.

- There is a lack of details about the development of Greater Sunrise and technical difficulties and risks associated with the project that will have to be carefully dealt with.

The group also expressed their dismay that the two individuals who did more than anyone to finally end the impasse – Bernard Collaery and Witness K – are being prosecuted. They called on the Australian government to drop proceedings.

MKOTT recommended that, should Timor-Leste undertake a program to process Greater Sunrise petroleum products on its south coast (Tasi Mane Project), Australia should offer all necessary assistance to reduce the project risks and deal with the likely multitude of complex technical issues.

### **Palace Visit**

I also met with Francisco Vasconcelos, Chief of Staff to Timor-Leste’s President, at Nicolau Lobato Presidential Palace.



*Senator Patrick with Francisco Vasconcelos, Chief of Staff to Timor-Leste’s President*

We discussed moral support for Bernard Collaery and Witness K, obviously without interfering improperly in any way in judicial proceedings of Australia.

The President later posted a statement on his Facebook page, approximately translated as, “The President of the Republic expresses his appreciation for both men’s contribution and expresses our solidarity with them both. The Chief of Staff will brief the President to look into the possibility of the state giving recognition and moral support for the two men’s contribution.”

The Collaery/Witness K issue is clearly one of sensitivity for the Australia–Timor-Leste relationship. It is my strong view that the Australian Government should revisit the prosecution of Bernard Collaery and Witness K with a view to abandoning proceedings in the national interest.

### **Servicing a Moral Debt**

As has been noted in the main body of the report, an issue of the ‘moral debt’ that Australia owes Timor-Leste was brought up during the visit. It was raised with me by MKOTT but also by others at informal meetings.

It is my view that Australia should commence a substantive aid program with a view to ultimately returning revenue that Timor-Leste should have previously derived from resources extracted in areas now within its maritime boundary.

One project that we should consider assisting with as a matter of priority is that of a high speed internet connection to Timor-Leste to assist in the country’s modernisation and economic development. This was an idea raised with Mr Fidelis Magalhaes during the delegation’s meeting with him. During that meeting I suggested Australia should replicate its arrangements with Solomon Islands and fully fund the extension of an undersea cable already running from Australia partway into the Timor Sea.

I also raised this suggestion with MKOTT and another member of the Timor-Leste Parliament. Both viewed it positively.

### **Anti-Corruption and Nepotism**

During private discussions that took place during my visit I was alerted to that fact that a number of Government contracts have been awarded to relatives of prominent past and current officials. No suggestions of nepotism or corruption were made, but I think it is important that an emerging independent nation be alive to the perceptions that could flow from these sorts of arrangements.

Corruption and nepotism can be corrosive of public trust, destructive of citizens’ morale, and a barrier to the emergence of talent, initiative and enterprise.

To the extent that Australia’s assistance in combating corruption and nepotism is sought, such assistance should be given.

*Senator Rex Patrick*



## **Program of the Parliamentary Delegation to Timor-Leste**

**28 October–1 November 2018**

### **Sunday 28 October**

- Arrival in Dili
- Dinner and briefing at Australian Ambassador's Residence, with Ambassador Peter Roberts and some embassy staff

### **Monday 29 October**

- Tour of National Parliament
- Observe Plenary Session of National Parliament
- Morning tea with Timorese Australia Awards alumni
- Meeting with Minister of State for Legislative Reform and Parliamentary Affairs, HE Fidelis Magalhaes
- Travel to Liquica district, visit to Liquica Public Secondary School, 'EQUIT-Plus' program
  - observe sexual health education session and hygiene facilities supported by Marie Stopes International and WaterAid
- Travel to Balibo town, check in to Balibo Fort Hotel (managed by Seasonal Worker Program alumna Luisa)
- Attend Cinema Lorosae community film screening, outdoor basketball court, Balibo town
  - pre-film screening of Partnership for Human development and Roads for Development (R4D) video about rural woman Florinda Elu, ambulance mechanic
  - screening of Australian film 'Paper Planes' dubbed in Tetun language

### **Tuesday 30 October**

- Balibo town visit
  - Balibo Cultural and Heritage Centre ('Balibo House'), including dental clinic
  - memorials to Timorese and Australian soldiers
  - accompanied by Australian Defence representative Lt Col Dan Gosling, who was stationed at Balibo Fort in 2002
- Visit to National Village Development Program (PNDS) Suku Odomau clean water project
- Visit to Roads for Development (R4D) Maliana-Saburai road project
- Market Development Facility (MDF) site visit – salt farming project, Sulilaran, Atabae
- Return to Dili

**Wednesday 31 October**

- Coffee at Black Box café with Seasonal Worker Program alumni Nuno Ridenio and Ameta
- Meeting with President of National Parliament, HE Arao Noe Amaral; Vice-Presidents of National Parliament, and other parliamentary representatives
- Meeting with La'ó Hamutuk, economic and social analysis NGO
- Meeting with Judicial System Monitoring Program (JSMP), justice sector NGO
- Meeting with Parliamentary Women's Group (GMPTL)
- Lunch with non-government organisations delivering the 'Nabilan' violence against women prevention and services project
- Visit to 'Chega!' exhibition and meeting with Hugo Fernandes and Chega! Board members, on the Timorese truth and reconciliation process
- Seminar and discussion on youth unemployment and related issues with Policy Leaders' Group
- Farewell reception at Australian Ambassador's residence with Timor-Leste parliamentarians, policy leaders and Australian Embassy staff

**Thursday 1 November**

- Depart Timor-Leste