



Submission No 29

Inquiry into Australia's Relationship with Timor-Leste

Name: Associate Professor Michele Ford

Organisation: University of Sydney- Sydney Southeast Asia Centre

Associate Professor Michele Ford
Director, Sydney Southeast Asia Centre

Mr Nick Champion MP
Chair
Foreign Affairs Sub-Committee of the
Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600
By email: jscfadt@aph.gov.au

27 March 2013

Dear Mr Champion

Inquiry into Australia's relationship with Timor-Leste

On behalf of the University of Sydney's [Sydney Southeast Asia Centre \(SSEAC\)](#), I am delighted to have the opportunity to make this submission to your Sub-Committee's timely inquiry into Australia's relationship with Timor-Leste. As I trust our submission demonstrates, the University of Sydney has a longstanding interest in Timor-Leste and its future, with considerable relevant expertise and a breadth and depth of activity that provides us with an arguably unique perspective on Australia's evolving relationship with Timor-Leste. We are eager to assist the Sub-Committee with its Inquiry and hope that our initial thoughts provide the basis for productive discussions between the Committee and academic staff of the University of Sydney.

Coordinating the University's expertise and engagement with Southeast Asia

The University of Sydney's substantial expertise on Timor-Leste, and our extensive engagement with the country, is coordinated through SSEAC, which we believe has the potential to become Australia's leading centre of interdisciplinary academic excellence on Southeast Asia. SSEAC already brings together over 200 academics from across the University working in five areas of thematic strength and relevance to the region: economic and social development, environment and resources, health, heritage and the arts, and state and society.

SSEAC supports academics working in the region and generates high impact interdisciplinary projects that address the short and longer term strategic challenges

faced by countries and communities in the region. It also seeks to enhance the learning experience of undergraduate, postgraduate and research students with an interest in Southeast Asia; enhancing opportunities for students from the region to spend time in Australia, and increasing the numbers of Australian students who graduate with a passion for engaging with the region. Finally, in collaboration with the University's faculties, SSEAC promotes the University's and Australia's engagement in the region by partnering strategically with governments, think tanks, non-government organisations and private sector organisations with an interest in Southeast Asia.

Specific expertise and activity relevant to Timor-Leste

Among SSEAC's membership we have nineteen academics with particular research and/or outreach interests in Timor-Leste, located in several University faculties. The University's engagement with Timor-Leste has been particularly strong in public health and related disciplines, but also in veterinary science, education, social work, political science, peace and conflict studies, human rights, industrial relations, history and anthropology. The **Appendix** to our attached response to the Inquiry's terms of reference provides details of these academics, along with a summary of their recent projects and activities relevant to Timor-Leste.

Some of these academics have been engaged with Timor-Leste since 1999, or even earlier. Partnerships were initially developed in collaboration with the relevant government ministries, in-country non-government organisations and development agencies. Several more formal relationships have developed at the faculty and sub-faculty level since 2007. Most recently, in 2011 an institution-wide MoU was signed with the Universidade Nacional Timor Lorosae (UNTL) to formalise active collaborations involving our Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, the Faculty of Education and Social Work and the Sydney Medical School. There has also been a deliberate effort by the University of Sydney to identify other Australian and international partners working in similar fields in Timor-Leste, leading to collaboration with the University of New South Wales (UNSW), Monash University, St John of God Hospitals, the Order of Malta, Marie-Stopes International, UNICEF, Asia Development Bank (ADB), Health Alliance International (HIA), the Royal Australian College of Surgeons (RACS) and the World Health Organisation (WHO).

The University of Sydney has applied for and received funding from AusAID for capacity building projects involving health leaders, technicians and clinicians from the Australia

Awards Fellowship (AAF) program and the AusAID Public Sector Linkages Program (PSLP). Funding has been provided by the Sydney Medical School to support two full scholarships for Timorese students to study Medicine, while the University's International Program for Development Fund (IPDF) has provided seed funding to establish some of our early health sector partnerships. In a very significant development, in 2011 the Timor-Leste Health Fund (Fundu Isin Diak) was launched to raise funds to support both outbound and inbound scholarships and health related projects. Strong engagement with Rotary, RSL, Australia-Timor Business Council and other Australia-based community organisations has facilitated fund-raising with HE Professor Marie Bashir as patron.

Suggested reforms to strengthen Australia's relationship with Timor-Leste and enhance the country's development

In our attached submission we have addressed each of the Inquiry's terms of reference, in most cases summarising the current situation from our perspective, and identifying key opportunities where we believe that action by the Australian Government would further strengthen Australia's relationship with Timor-Leste. We see great potential for the Government to continue building the capacity in-country that is so vital to Timor-Leste's continued development and to enhance the links between the people of Timor-Leste and Australia. Our submission offers the following five recommendations for consideration by the Sub-Committee.

First, that the Australian Government provides support for the training of Timorese academic staff, curriculum development, research capacity building and the establishment of tertiary sector infrastructure such as libraries and information technology in Timor-Leste. Such support will respond to Timorese-driven priorities and also recognise the important role that higher education can play in capacity building.

Second, that the Australian Government consider directly supporting recent efforts made by Universities Australia to better coordinate the Australian university sector's engagement and capacity building with institutions in Timor-Leste. Early consultation has suggested that in-country organisations (including the Australian Embassy staff) would prefer a sector-driven coordinated approach by lead institutions based on prior and existing sectoral engagement. Substantial Australian university sectoral mapping to the Government of Timor-Leste's priorities has already been undertaken by Universities Australia. The Australian Government should build on this to maximise the utility of Australian universities' engagement with Timor-Leste.

Third, that the Australian Government increases opportunities for cultural, scientific and educational exchange based in Timor-Leste, which will strengthen mutual understanding of culture and people in both nations and strengthen the important role these interactions play in soft diplomacy.

Fourth, that the Australian Government work to increase access to language training, and particularly to English language skills for students, academics and professionals in Timor-Leste.

Fifth, that the Australian Government and higher education institutions explore mechanisms to facilitate greater formal recognition of people-to-people and institutional links between Australia and Timor-Leste through honorary titles, appointments and mutual recognition of qualifications and expertise. This could also include greater diplomatic coordination and logistical support to facilitate institutional level partnership building.

SSEAC academics with expertise relevant to Timor-Leste would welcome the opportunity to engage further with members of the Sub-Committee of the Joint Standing Committee for Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade about these recommendations and any other issues of interest to the Committee.

Yours sincerely



Associate Professor Michele Ford
Director, Sydney Southeast Asia Centre

Attachment Sydney Southeast Asia Centre response to the Inquiry's Terms of Reference

Attachment appendix Summary of current University of Sydney academics' involvement in Timor-Leste

Inquiry into Australia's Relationship with Timor-Leste

Sydney Southeast Asia Centre Submission to the
Joint Standing Committee for Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade

Response to Inquiry Terms of Reference

1. Bilateral relationships at the parliamentary and government levels

The expertise of Australia's academic community provides a valuable resource for complementing and informing the work of governments, and for promoting informed debate and the development of sustainable solutions. We see significant potential for the Australian Government to utilise the resource of Australia's public university sector more effectively to inform the development of strategy and policy, and to assist with the implementation and evaluation of programs.

2. Aid, including support with governance issues

Current situation

University of Sydney academics have received funding from aid agencies such as AusAID to support work in areas identified by our Timorese partners. For example, in 2007, the Ministry of Health identified an urgent need for clinical skills training in the management of emergencies presenting to the Hospital Nacional Guido Valadares and to newly established district referral hospitals. In response, the AusAID Public Sector Linkage program funded a series of train-the-trainer workshops during 2009-2011, with medical, nursing and ambulance staff. Current teaching methods for clinical skills were imparted to a small group of clinical and college teachers who would be supervising and training new medical and nursing students studying in Timor-Leste. This work has now been taken up and extended by AusAID-funded programs through the Royal Australian College of Surgeons (RACS). Similar capacity building is occurring with University of Sydney academics at the National Laboratory (funded by WHO and ADB), building on work started by St John of God, Victoria.

University of Sydney researchers who have experience working in Timor-Leste are increasingly being asked to provide consultancy services to evaluate aid and other funded programs. One of the ongoing challenges in doing so is adapting to a constantly changing environment in Timor-Leste. Institutional restructuring, staff mobility due to people studying abroad and changes in local policy require a solid foundation and understanding of the local context and sensitivity to local political and social issues. However, even more challenging (yet crucial) is maintaining good communication and cooperative relationships with other Australian and international agencies working in-country to avoid duplication of effort, to maximise the benefits and minimise the harms of this work. Such relationships require regular and deep contact with our Timorese counterparts.

Opportunities for the future

The Government of Timor-Leste has developed a Strategic Plan for development over the next twenty years. This recognises the importance of investing in human resources, particularly in the higher education of the large proportion of young people finishing secondary schooling over the next decade. However, the tertiary education sector will require substantial strengthening to achieve this.

Australian support for higher degree training of academic staff, teaching and curriculum development support, research capacity building and establishment of infrastructure such as libraries and information technology are thus urgently needed. The Hon Steve Bracks, in his capacity as advisor to the Prime Minister HE Xanana Gusmao, has commenced some discussion with Australian University Vice-Chancellors to explore options for better coordination and strengthened support for the tertiary sector. Australian Government support and engagement in this area would be welcome as a priority.

Recommendation 1

That the Australian Government provides support for the training of Timorese academic staff, curriculum development, research capacity building and the establishment of tertiary sector infrastructure such as libraries and information technology in Timor-Leste. Such support will respond to Timorese-driven priorities and also recognise the important role that higher education can play in capacity building.

Recommendation 2

That the Australian Government consider directly supporting recent efforts made by Universities Australia to better coordinate the Australian university sector's engagement and capacity building with institutions in Timor-Leste. Early consultation has suggested that in-country organisations (including the Australian Embassy staff) would prefer a sector-driven coordinated approach by lead institutions based on prior and existing sectoral engagement. Substantial Australian university sectoral mapping to the Government of Timor-Leste's priorities has already been undertaken by Universities Australia. The Australian Government should build on this to maximise the utility of Australian universities' engagement with Timor-Leste.

3. Economic issues including trade and investment

As for Term of Reference 1, the expertise of academics provides an immensely valuable resource for helping to complement the work of government, promote informed debate and develop sustainable solutions. There is significant potential for the Australian Government to deepen its relationship with Timor-Leste by utilising this resource more fully and effectively, for example, by supporting and formalising the substantial coordinating work that has occurred through collaboration between the Australian Government and the university sector through its peak body, Universities Australia.

4. Cultural, educational and scientific relations and exchanges

Current situation

Educational and scientific relations and exchanges have been a key component of the University of Sydney's relationship with Timor-Leste. The University of Sydney has provided in-country *and* Australian-based training for government ministry employees, Timorese non-government organisations and tertiary education staff.

Some of these activities have been Timor-Leste specific but, importantly, many of them have included Timorese participants as part of *regional* programs (e.g. Asia-Pacific or Southeast Asian programs). This allows for linkage with peers in other nations as well as with Australian colleagues. An example of this is the senior government advisor program run by the University of Sydney's Graduate School of Government. Advisors from both sides of the Timorese government joined colleagues from other Pacific and Southeast Asian nations to learn about policy development, government relations and potential solutions to common problems. They received teaching from high profile Australians, such as former state premiers and advisors. Similar leadership development opportunities and networks have also been established in health and have mainly been funded through the (former) AusAID Australian Leadership Award Fellowship schemes. Whilst most senior level exchanges have been Australian-based for potential Timorese leaders, several University of Sydney staff have also spent extended periods of study in Timor-Leste and have acquired language skills, in some cases funded by the Endeavour Executive Award program.

Student mobility is the other key area of activity which has mainly involved Australian students spending short periods of their study in Timor-Leste. Since 2009, a small number of medical students and international public health students have spent 4-8 weeks in-country, obtaining some basic language skills as well as cultural and health-specific understanding. In 2012, the Sydney Southeast Asia Centre was successful in gaining seed funding from the Department of Industry, Innovation, Science, Research, and Tertiary Education (DIISRTE) for an interdisciplinary student mobility program for medical, education and agriculture students, to take place in July 2013. This program aims to deliver aspects of the Australian curriculum *in* Timor-Leste, thereby allowing Timorese and Australian faculty and students to learn together. Such initiatives are a vital way of building academic linkages.

It is important to note the complex language situation in Timor-Leste and the impact it has on cultural, educational and scientific exchange. Although the local language is Tetun, the official language is Portuguese and many Timorese professionals have trained abroad, particularly in Indonesia. Consequently, many academics frequently use Bahasa Indonesia in teaching and technical programs. UNTL has committed to establishing a language centre to improve access to a range of languages, particularly English. With the bulk of academic publications worldwide occurring in English, a lack of English proficiency amongst academics and professionals is an important issue that needs to be addressed. The USAID program has funded some limited English language programs at UNTL. Funding has also been provided by Portugal for training in Portuguese. There remains, however, much to be done in terms of increasing Timor-Leste academics' capacity to participate in the international academic community.

Opportunities for the future

Short-term Australian-based learning continues to inspire the professional development of many Timorese staff and the facilitation of linkages with other regional colleagues should be encouraged. However, there is also a need for Timorese-based scientific, educational and cultural exchange which will strengthen Australia's understanding of this near neighbour, its language and people. Universities like the University of Sydney are well-placed to facilitate this and to work with Timorese academics to develop context-sensitive tertiary curricula of international standard. Government support for such initiatives would maximise their reach and utility. Facilitating access to language programs – specifically English language programs – within Timor-Leste is another element of academic support that should be explored by the Australian Government.

Recommendation 3

That the Australian Government increases opportunities for cultural, scientific and educational exchange based in Timor-Leste which will strengthen mutual understanding of culture and people in both nations and strengthen the important role these interactions play in soft diplomacy.

Recommendation 4

That the Australian Government work to increase access to language training, and particularly to English language skills for students, academics and professionals in Timor-Leste.

5. People to people links

Current situation

People to people links between staff and students at the University of Sydney and in Timor-Leste have largely been informal. Timorese alumni from higher degrees and short-term training programs, along with in-country collaborations, underpin the majority of these links. An example of a more formal link is the former Minister for Health's appointment as an honorary academic with the Sydney Medical School. Professor Nelson Martins is now a Senior Researcher and Director of the Postgraduate Coursework and Research program for the Faculty of Health Sciences at UNTL. He teaches into some University of Sydney online courses in the Masters of International Public Health and actively collaborates on research projects.

Opportunities for the future

As Australian institutional relationships with Timor-Leste mature it will be important to recognise these relationships more formally. The Australian Government should consider facilitating the development of long-term collaborations between Australian and Timorese educational institutions as a way of deepening and formalising these relationships. This could include encouraging honorary titles and appointments, joint teaching and supervision arrangements and diplomatic and logistical support for institutional partnerships.

Recommendation 5

That the Australian Government and higher education institutions explore mechanisms to facilitate greater formal recognition of people-to-people and institutional links between Australia and Timor-Leste through honorary titles, appointments and mutual recognition of qualifications and expertise. This could also include greater diplomatic coordination and logistical support to facilitate institutional level partnership building.

6. Defence cooperation and those aspects of regional security that affect Timor-Leste

Australian academics have considerable expertise and skills in peace and conflict resolution, potentially providing a non-political resource to facilitate and promote regional security. As for Terms of Reference 1 and 3, we see significant potential for governments to utilise this resource more effectively. There is scope for the Department of Defence, other departments and universities to continue strengthening relationships, and for government agencies generally to support coordinating structures and programs that enable university-based expertise to be accessed quickly when required.

Appendix: Summary of current University of Sydney academics' involvement in Timor-Leste

Area of Strength	Faculty and Staff involved	Name of Project	Activities
Health	Office for Global Health (Sydney Medical School and Sydney Nursing School) - Dr Kirsty Foster - Dr Anthony Delaney - Ms Rebecca Riordan	Building the critical care workforce via a professional development training collaboration <i>Funded by AusAID's Public Sector Linkages Program (PSLP), Sydney Medical School, Sydney Nursing School and the University's International Program Development Fund (IPDF)</i>	Four critical care workshops, two 'train-the-trainer' education sessions and three follow up 'on the job' training days.
	Sydney Nursing School - Dr John Grootjans	Supporting community health workers	Community-based education of nurses in Maubisse district, development of a handbook for community health workers in Tetun.
	Office for Global Health (Sydney Medical School) - Prof Merrilyn Walton	Health Leadership Program <i>Funded by ALAF</i>	Providing leadership training to health-related professionals by providing short-term placements and training programs in Australia that will enable the delivery of evidence based health care, management, education and policy within the health care system of Timor-Leste.
	Office for Global Health (Sydney Medical School) - Prof Merrilyn Walton	Health Workforce Training and Education in Quality and Safety <i>Funded by University of Sydney IPDF</i>	Working in partnership with the Ministry of Health two workshops will be delivered focusing on appropriate prescribing of antibiotics.
	Centre for Disability Research and Policy - Prof Gwynnyth Llewellyn	Increasing capacity in disability rights based policy in South East Asia <i>Funded by ALAF</i>	This project involved 22 Fellows from 8 East Asian nations in a three week program in Sydney and Canberra. Three Fellows were from Timor-Leste.
	Centre for Disability Research and Policy - Ms Ros Madden	CBR Building capacity for monitoring and sustainability <i>Funded by ALAF</i>	This three week program has involved 10 Fellows from four Pacific nations of which Timor-Leste is one.

Area of Strength	Faculty and Staff involved	Name of Project	Activities
	Office for Global Health (Sydney Medical School) - Prof Peter McMinn	National Laboratory strengthening to undertake communicable disease surveillance <i>Funded by WHO, AusAID and Asia Development Bank</i>	Building the capacity of the National Laboratory in the identification of communicable disease pathogens of national, regional and global significance.
	Office for Global Health (Sydney Medical School) - A/Prof Lyndal Trevena	Operations Research Workshop	Assisted Health Alliance International (HAI) in Dili with an Operations Research workshop in November 2010.
	Office for Global Health (Sydney Medical School) - A/Prof Lyndal Trevena	Primary Health Care	A/ Professor Lyndal Trevena has been collaborating closely with the Dr Nelson Martins (Minister of Health) to review data from the Servisu Integrado Saude Communitaire (SISCa) program. The Timorese Ministry of Health has prioritized this program which means "Integrated Health Services at the Community Level" in order to bring services and health promotion information to people who otherwise have little contact with the formal health system.
State and Society	Department of Political Economy - Dr Tim Anderson		Undertaken research about politics, social medicine and land reform.
	Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies - Dr Lynda Blanchard	Developing a Community-Led Model of Peace Tourism in	The project proposes a model of peace tourism as a part of nation-building .By collaborating with the Ministry of Tourism, Trade and Industry, Secretary of State for Youth and Sport and youth organisations the project aims to develop tourism policy, beginning with youth under-education and under-employment as a peace issue.
	Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies - Dr Wendy Lambourne		Undertaken research about transitional justice and peace building.

Area of Strength	Faculty and Staff involved	Name of Project	Activities
	Graduate School of Governance (GSG) - Prof Geoff Gallop	Policy and Political Advisor Program	Eight political advisors have participated in the program since its inception in 2008. In 2011, GSG delivered an AusAID ALAF-funded program to train participants in the regulation and management of extractive industries. The cohort of students included five participants : two from the office of the Secretary of State, Natural Resources and three from the National Petroleum Authority.
	Department of Government and International Relations - Professor Rodney Tiffen		Author <i>Diplomatic Deceits: Government, Media and East Timor</i> (UNSW Press, 2001)
Economic and Social Development	Department of Indonesian Studies - A/Prof Michele Ford	Industrial Relations <i>Funded by ARC Future Fellowship</i>	Undertaken research with members of the trade union movement and their donors.
	Faculty of Education and Social Work - Prof Jude Irwin		Developing capacity building programs for Social workers as a pathway to social change
	Faculty of Veterinary Science - Professor Michael Ward - Dr Helen Scott-Orr - Dr Jenny-Ann Toribio	Endemic bovine brucellosis control <i>Funded by ACIAR</i>	The project includes visits to the governments of both Indonesia and Timor-Leste. In May 2010, a workshop on cattle health and production was held in Kupang to inform younger staff from both Indonesia and Timor-Leste of past work carried out and to determine the integrated priorities for the future.