



Submission No 47

Inquiry into Australia's Relationship with Timor-Leste

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Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade Inquiry into Australia's Relationship with Timor-Leste

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¹ This submission is the result of a successful University of Melbourne 2011 Interdisciplinary Seed Funding Grant for 'The Uma Mutin (White House) Timor-Leste project'. This project is closely connected to the Cultural Materials Conservation project detailed in the associated University of Melbourne submission to this inquiry.

Summary

There is significant audiovisual material held in institutions and in private hands in Australia that relates to Timor-Leste. This includes substantial collections at National Film and Sound Archive and the National Library of Australia. This material is relevant to the history of Timor-Leste, of Timor-Leste's struggle for independence, but is currently not easily available for scholars, individuals or communities in Timor-Leste. Australia's relationship with Timor-Leste would be substantially strengthened if Australia were to help make this material available in Timor-Leste (especially for those who operate within a predominantly oral culture), and to younger diasporic and local East Timorese who do not have the historical context for this material.

Background

My submission is based on my knowledge as a dual citizen of Timor-Leste and Australia, and my experience as a diasporic East Timorese. It is based on work done to date as a 2011 Research Scholar in the National Film and Sound Archives, entitled: *Reconstructing and preserving East Timorese Indigenous identity, culture, values and beliefs through archival research*, and work with the University of Melbourne.

Significant audio-visual material exists in Australia relating to important historical events in Timor-Leste. With time, the main agents in these events have passed away, and there is a danger that age and memory will dissipate this human history and resource for Timor-Leste.

Issues	Considerations	Suggested solutions	Outcomes	Requirements
Diasporic knowledge loss	Much material relating to the history of Timor-Leste remains in institutions and private collections in Australia	Digitised 'repatriation', selected repatriation of key original documents or items	Provides East Timorese with access to material for education, and community benefit. Supports and strengthens Australia's relationship with East Timor	Requires sustained research and prioritisation of items and actions. Requires identification of agencies, stakeholder and individuals

Relocation of significant material	Issues exist with the safety of original items held in Timor-Leste	Assist Timor-Leste to develop archival, and museum systems and infrastructure, to international standards. Provide IT training for East Timorese in archives and museums.	Enablement of information, collection and knowledge sharing between Timor-Leste and Australia.	Agreements for training programs. Support for training partnerships. AusAID funding to clearly include such training.
Copyright	Material about Timor-Leste, or using Timorese knowledge holders is copyrighted in Australia, by Australians, making it difficult to secure access easily for sharing with East Timorese	Review copyright laws as they relate to the use of oral knowledge holders own knowledge in documented records and audio visual material.	Facilitation of ability to share material and provide access to material about East Timor in East Timor.	Establishment of joint East Timor/Australian committee or panel to examine issues.
Ownership	Material relating to East Timor is owned and in Australia and not available to East Timorese.	Awareness raising campaign about the value of East Timorese cultural material held in Australia to Timorese people.	Identification of material held in Australia.	Support and structure for awareness raising campaign.
Access	Disparate cataloguing of material East Timorese material in institutions in Australia.	Co-ordinated approach across Australian cultural institutions.	Improved identification of East Timorese material held in Australian institutions.	Conduct assessment of current practice, and possible improvements.

Awareness raising and education	East Timorese are unaware of archival material that may be available to them and that relates to their history or experience, and need training in archive management.	Awareness raising campaign that highlights East Timorese material in Australian collections and associated training programs.	Improved understanding of the existence of material and how best to care for it.	Short courses as a partnered opportunity between TL and Australian institutions.
Ethics	Material is appropriated by scholars who have the ability to publish, without acknowledging the East Timorese expertise involved.	Assessment of relevant IP laws in both TL and Australia.	Understanding of needs of both countries in developing scholarly or other material relating to TL	Agreements on publications that involve TL information or knowledge.

Conclusion

Australia is currently home to a wealth of East Timorese cultural material. Preserving and sharing this material with the people of Timor-Leste and to younger diasporic and local East Timorese can greatly enhance Australia's relationship with Timor-Leste. The Australian Government should seek ways to further support this critical building block of national identity.