



Submission No 63

## **Inquiry into Australia's Relationship with Timor-Leste**

Name: Mr Barry Brown

Organisation: Canberra Friends of Dili

Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade  
*Foreign Affairs Sub-Committee*



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**Submission to the  
Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade's  
Foreign Affairs Sub-committee.**

**Parliamentary Inquiry into Australia's Relations with Timor Leste.**

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**Summary of Proposals:**

- A resolution of both Houses of Parliament recognize the sacrifice of the Timorese people in WW11
- Renaming the existing scholarship scheme to provide on-going recognition of this sacrifice
- Restore development assistance funding taken to support refugees in Australia
- Extend seasonal worker program and include a technical training dimension
- Support and encourage Australia business to invest in employment intensive industry, such as Tourism and Agriculture
- Encourage and support community and people to people groups by relaxing the processes involved in obtaining tax deductibility for funds raised for overseas assistance.

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**Introduction:**

This submission is lodged by Canberra Friends of Dili (CFD). CFD is a voluntary organisation and has no paid staff. It is managed by a Committee including a Convenor, Secretary Treasurer and four Committee Members. The Committee meets monthly and meetings are open to all members. Information relevant to Timor Leste is circulated to members via an extensive email list of members and non-member supporters primarily resident in the ACT.

Canberra Friends of Dili has been and is involved in the following activities:

- Establishment and maintenance of the Friendship City Relationship between the Government of the ACT and the Dili District Administration and securing the support of ACT Labor, Liberal and Greens Parties for this relationship;
- Provision of in-country support for Dili based Project Officers and a local representative;
- Establishment and maintenance of Friendship School relationships between schools in Canberra and Dili;
- Supported the development of the Haburas Dezemvolve Talento (HADEZTA) youth group in Ai Mutin, Dili. This is a group of young Timorese volunteers dedicated to training unemployed youth in English and IT skills to improve their employment prospects;

- Provided practical support to East Timorese students studying in Canberra and visitors to Canberra;
  - CFD members have devised and led a University of the Third Age (U3A) course on East Timor, providing resources and speakers and participated in Tetum classes conducted by East Timorese residents in Canberra;
  - Assisted the Timor Leste Embassy in Canberra in a number of activities;
  - Arranged a tour to 10 districts in Timor Leste by 10 members of CFD;
  - Supported groups working with people with disabilities
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## **SUBMISSION:**

### **We ask that the Sub-committee consider the following proposals:**

- The Australian government should pass a motion passed in both houses of Parliament to give official recognition to the role played and the substantial sacrifices made by the people of Timor-Leste in supporting Australian military forces in the defence of Australia in 1942. These sacrifices are well documented in the historical records of this period and in particular in the history of the Australian military unit involved, the 2/2 Independent Company. As a nation Timor Leste suffered significant loss of civilian life as a direct result of this support.
- The Government should also re-name the Australian scholarship scheme, known as the Australian Development Scholarships (ADS), which provides assistance for Timor-Leste students to study in Australia. It is appropriate that the new name provides recognition of the role played by the people of Timor-Leste in World War II and as a continuing reminder of the historical and close relations that exists between the two countries. It would also be appropriate for the advice of the Timorese to be sought about an appropriate name.
- Canberra Friends of Dili deplore the recent Government decision to divert development assistance funding from Timor Leste to provide funding for the maintenance of refugees in Australia. We ask that the Sub-committee recommend that Australia restore these aid funds and also recommends that the amount be increased at least in line with global inflationary trends.
- We ask that the Australian Government supports and extends the current seasonal workers programs and includes an element in these programs to provide technical training so that seasonal workers can increase their skills while in Australia.
- The Australian Government is urged to support and encourage Australian business to invest in Timor Leste, especially in industries that will increase employment such as agriculture and tourism.

- We urge the Government to encouragement and support community to community relations between Australia and Timor-Leste, through Friendship groups, service organisations (e.g. Rotary, Lions), church groups, educational/school tours and other people to people relations by simplifying and relaxing the qualifications necessary for such organisations to obtain tax deductibility status for funds donated for projects in Timor Leste.

This submission has been prepared on behalf of Canberra Friends of Dili by:

Barry Brown  
Convenor,  
Canberra Friends of Dili