



# Carmelite Friars of Australia and Timor-Leste

## TIMOR-LESTE MISSION CO-ORDINATOR UPDATE

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*During the quiet hours of Australia's winter season, beyond dusk and before dawn, may each one of us find time to reflect, read and update ourselves on the most urgent issues of the people of Timor-Leste.*

One of the most urgent issues is the oil and gas which lies beneath the Timor Sea. Ever since Timor-Leste gained independence from Indonesia in 2002, the negotiations over these deposits, which are potentially worth tens of billions of dollars, have been a strong point of contention between Australia and Timor-Leste.

The President of Timor-Leste, Jose Ramos-Horta, visited Australia two weeks ago to open a new embassy for his young country in Canberra but it is at a time when relations between the two neighbours are tense. Speaking to reporters in Canberra, Mr Ramos-Horta said he had safety concerns about an energy consortium's plan to use untested technology to develop the gas field off Timor-Leste's south coast. Mr Ramos-Horta also made the following comment: *"the very first step that has to happen is for a very frank, transparent discussion about all the options."*

When 50% of the population of Timor-Leste has no choice but to live on less than \$1.00 a day, shouldn't Australia be doing far more to help Timor-Leste process the oil and create jobs on East Timorese soil?

### **New Mobile Medical Clinic Van**

It has been purchased and has arrived in Zumalai sub-district! The Carmelites are very happy with this van which has a fully protected and large storage area for medical supplies. They said that it is very comfortable to travel in and rides very smoothly compared with the old van. It is a wonderful asset in that they are now able to carry sick patients back to the Zumalai Health Clinic or Suai Hospital for specialist treatment. The new van travels better as many of the roads are treacherous because of their blind corners and narrow width. The roads also have huge potholes and are often impassable as a result of landslides.



The next clinic will be held in July and the Carmelite sisters have already ordered the medical supplies from Indonesia. This van will be used by the sisters to travel and carry the medical supplies to the remote and mountainous villages of Zumalai sub-district. The mobile medical clinics are held in schools, churches, homes and wherever there is an empty building. Timor-Leste has one of the highest maternal and infant mortality rates in the world – 60 out of 1,000 infants born alive, die before their first birthday.

### **New Prior Provincial of Australia and Timor-Leste**

The Carmelite Friars held their triennial Chapter Meeting in April this year. They elected Denis Andrew as the new Prior Provincial of Australia and Timor-Leste. Denis was the Parish priest of Our Lady of Mount Carmel Wentworthville in Sydney. In his new position he has moved to the Provincial Office at Middle Park. Much of his time since being elected has been spent visiting Carmelite ministries and places. In the photo below he is visiting his old parish of Our Lady of Mount Carmel Wentworthville and is with the East Timor Committee. There are a number of these committees operating throughout Australia by supporters of the Carmelites.



**From L to R—Denise Miel, Margaret Harrison, Colleen Fuller, Cathy Flood, Greg Reid, Denis Andrew O.Carm, Paul Quinn Absent: Pat Cook, Helen Mitzi**

The following points taken from Wentworthville 's East Timor Committee vision statement give an outline of the areas the group is endeavoring to implement.

*“The East Timor Committee is a group of interested parishioners who share a common faith and vision for the Carmelites in Timor-Leste. Underpinning our mission is the recognition of the many historic, geographic and spiritual links between our two nations. Our vision is to be a proactive group concerned with the following on-going broad areas:*

- \* ***Spiritual support, visits and exchanges;***
- \* ***Education;***
- \* ***Regular communication, feedback and accountability;***
- \* ***Social justice issues;***
- \* ***Supporting development;***
- \* ***Parish fund raising”***

Two groups from Wentworthville Parish have visited Timor-Leste since the group formed in 2002.

### **New Timor-Leste Ambassador to Australia**



The swearing-in ceremony of the new Timor-Leste Ambassador to Australia, Mr Abel Guterres was held in Dili in May before the head of state, Dr Jose Ramos-Horta. Abel is now living in the new Timor-Leste Embassy in Canberra.

Ambassador Abel Guterres knows Australia very well. He lived here from 1975 until 2008, first as a refugee, then as an Australian resident and citizen and then as Consul-General of Timor-Leste in Sydney. As Consul General, he played a leading role with laying the foundations for the many friendship cities especially in Victoria and New South Wales.

Special Blessings on all the Carmelite Supporters!

*Rosemary Patterson*

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