17 April 2021

A message from Australia's Ambassador to Timor-Leste, Peter Roberts
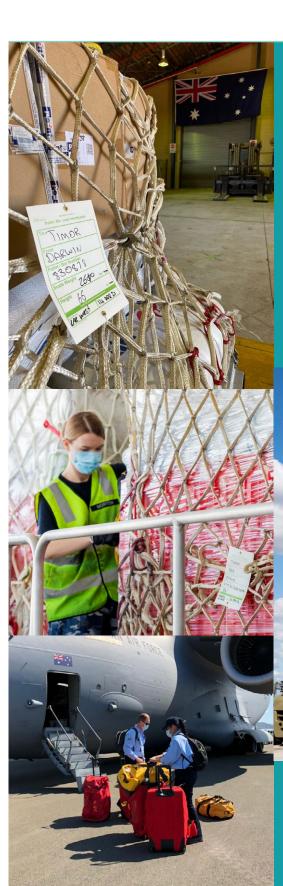

Welcome to our first Embassy newsletter for 2021. With COVID-19 cases increasing and the Easter weekend flooding, these are challenging times. I pay tribute to the way all Timorese are responding. Australia is proud to partner with you. I believe that our relationship is stronger than ever.

With COVID-19 transmission sharply increasingly, now more than ever we must continue our COVID-safe practices. We each have a role to play in reducing the spread of infection and protecting ourselves and our community. Australia continues to work with Timor-Leste, particularly the Ministry of Health, on the response.

The best protection of all lies in universal vaccination. Australia is pleased to be assisting Timor-Leste to access safe and effective COVID-19 vaccines, through COVAX as well as the supply of Australian-manufactured vaccines. Achieving full coverage will help our region to recover, rebuild and prosper.

Australia's latest support for Timor-Leste includes:

01 AUD 7 million in additional emergency relief following the Easter weekend flooding.

02 Installation of 33 water tanks across 25 sites including evacuation centres and affected communities through our PARTISIPA program to provide emergency water supplies and reduce the risk of water-borne diseases.

03 Immediate provision of food, water, hygiene kits and bedding to the most vulnerable people in evacuation centres through NGOs in the Australian Humanitarian Partnership.

04 Psychosocial support to those in evacuation centres, including children, through our Nabilan program and partners.

05 Immediate support in the aftermath of the flooding to restore essential services such as power and water at critical sites, including the Integrated Crisis Management Centre, the National Laboratory and COVID-19 isolation centres.

06 Delivery by the Royal Australian Air Force of more than 27 tonnes of emergency relief materials, including PPE, hygiene, kitchen and shelter kits.

07 Initial deployment of the first two members of an Australian Medical Assistance Team (AUSMAT) – health specialists to work with the Ministry of Health's surveillance team to manage public health needs from COVID-19 and the flooding.

08 Defence Cooperation Program funding and personnel to support the F-FDTL's provision of emergency power, planning, food, water and clean-up activities.

09 Connectivity support through the Pacific Flights Program to ensure essential humanitarian supplies, medical stores and personnel can travel to assist the response effort.

10 Australian Federal Police support for the PNTL to maintain operations after the floods and continue its focus on border security, with the construction of five new remote border posts and the delivery of enhanced training to combat gender-based violence.

11 AUD 24.3 million to support Timor-Leste's vaccine access, including practical and technical support for the COVAX rollout (including cold chain and supply management, logistics and public health education), and an offer to supply Australian-manufactured AstraZeneca vaccines to enable timely rollout at a time when the international supply of vaccines is constrained.

Australia's vaccine, COVID-19 and emergency response support for Timor-Leste are in addition to our usual AUD100 million annual development partnership.

Apart from these government initiatives, it has been great to see the solidarity shown by so many individual Australians – a testament to the close ties between our peoples.

All this could not have been possible without the tireless work by the government of Timor-Leste and its frontline workers. Our thoughts are with everyone who has been affected.

To stay up to date with developments follow our Facebook page 'Australia in Timor-Leste'. You can find past editions of this newsletter on our website.