



May 2022

A message from Australia's Ambassador to Timor-Leste, Bill Costello



As I mark 100 days as Australia's Ambassador to Timor-Leste, I am looking forward to welcoming Australia's Governor-General, His Excellency General the Honourable David Hurley AC DSC (Retd), to Timor-Leste. The Governor-General will join us for the inauguration of Dr José Ramos-Horta as Timor-Leste's next President and for the celebration of the 20th anniversary of the restoration of Timor-Leste's independence.

In the 20 years since the restoration of Timor-Leste's independence in 2002, Australia and Timor-Leste have built a deep and enduring partnership. It is a partnership based not just on the fact we are close neighbours, but on the recognition that our people and our futures are inextricably linked. The security, stability and prosperity of one partner is critical to the other.

When the COVID pandemic first emerged to threaten the lives of people everywhere, Australia supplied a range of medical and other assistance to help protect the health and safety of the Timorese people. Australia has also been the largest donor of COVID-19 vaccines to Timor-Leste, providing more than a million doses of AstraZeneca and Pfizer vaccines.



When severe flooding at Easter in 2021 forced tens of thousands of people out of their homes and killed more than 30 people, Australia was again here to provide support. In the weeks that followed, we delivered more than 86 tonnes of humanitarian assistance and medical supplies on a series of RAAF and commercial flights to Dili.

But the partnership between Australia and Timor-Leste is about much more than supporting each other in times of crisis. Our bonds run deeper than that. Both our countries are committed to building strong and prosperous economies that support employment and generate lasting opportunities for our young people.

The Australian and Timor-Leste governments are working together to deliver world-class transformational infrastructure projects in Timor-Leste. For example, Australia is supporting Timor-Leste to build an undersea telecommunications cable between Australia and Dili that will provide high-speed internet connections for consumers and businesses across the country. This connectivity will create new opportunities for Timorese businesses to sell their products internationally and for consumers to access the best the world has to offer.

Australia is also working with Japan and the Asian Development Bank to redevelop Dili International Airport. As the volume of air traffic increases, this will provide Timor-





Leste greater connectivity to the world, opening pathways for Timorese-produced goods to access a wider range of markets. And Australia was the first country to agree a bilateral Air Services Agreement with Timor-Leste, resulting in more flights between Darwin and Dili.

Labour mobility provides valuable economic benefits for both our countries. Timorese workers who travel to Australia to work on farms, abattoirs, nurseries and in other businesses gain not just wages to send back to Timor to support their families and local communities, they also gain valuable skills. When these workers return to Timor, they can use these skills to start new businesses, generating income for their families and communities. At the same time, Australian businesses gain from employing Timor-Leste's highly regarded workers to help fill critical gaps in the Australian workforce. There are currently 1,480 Timorese people working in Australia with a further 1,669 Timorese workers requested for additional roles this year.

Australia is also helping Timor-Leste to protect its sovereignty. Next year, Australia will deliver two Guardian

Class patrol boats to the Maritime Component of the F-FDTL. These brand-new patrol boats are being built specifically for Timor-Leste and will provide the capability to monitor and protect Timor-Leste's valuable maritime zones from illegal fishing and other transnational crime. We are also continuing to upgrade the capabilities of the PNTL and F-FTDL through our long-standing and ongoing police and defence cooperation programs.

We are connected by our commitment to the region and support for the rule of law. Australia is a long-term supporter of Timor-Leste's aspirations to join both the WTO and ASEAN. Both countries have been outspoken in support of Ukraine's sovereignty. We share a deep commitment to human rights.

In just 20 short years since the restoration of independence, Timor-Leste has made remarkable progress as a free, independent and democratic nation. As we all look to the future, the people of Timor-Leste can be confident that Australia will remain by your side, helping to build an even stronger, more prosperous and more secure Timor-Leste.



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