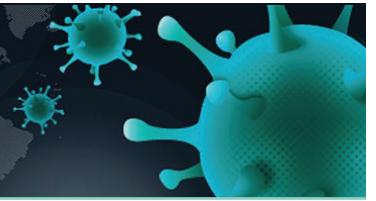




Australian Embassy
Timor-Leste

COVID-19



24 September 2021

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



Since our last newsletter a month ago, Timor-Leste has been fighting through its second (and worst) wave of COVID-19 infections since the beginning of the pandemic, driven by the Delta variant.

On 24 August we saw the highest new case numbers in a single day (532) and it has been deeply saddening to witness the increase in deaths over the past month. I extend my condolences to those families who have lost loved ones.

But the fight continues and now over 30% of Timor-Leste's eligible population (18+) is fully vaccinated – an amazing achievement in such a short amount of time. In Dili that number rises to over 60% and everyone should be incredibly proud of the progress made to date.

In the past month Australia has:

- 01 Welcomed the arrival of an Australian Medical Assistance Team (AUSMAT) to Timor-Leste. This is the second team of medical experts to arrive this year and its members are supporting the Ministry of Health to provide critical care to COVID-19 patients, bolstering the efforts of the medical teams at the Vera Cruz and Lahane isolation facilities and National Hospital. I was honoured to accompany the team when they recently briefed Prime Minister Taur Matan Ruak on their activities, highlighting too the tireless service of Timor-Leste's healthcare workers throughout the pandemic.
- 02 Provided 30 oxygen concentrators and therapy kits from Australia, to support the Ministry of Health's critical care response for the treatment of severe COVID-19 cases. Australia is proud to continue its contribution of life-saving medical supplies in Timor-Leste's fight against COVID-19.
- 03 Participated in the multinational defence exercise Hari'i Hamutuk. Despite the challenges of COVID-19, the exercise was a great success, with 210 soldiers from 5 nations conducting specialist training and construction across Metinaro, Hera, Baucau and Tilomar.

Earlier this week on 20 September we marked the 22nd anniversary of the deployment of INTERFET – the International Force for East Timor. We are proud of our partnership, then and now, as we work together in pursuit of a stable and prosperous region.



General Sir Peter Cosgrove speaking on a visit to Dili in 2019.

04 Continued to prioritise education by partnering with the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport to implement the new phase of our ALMA program in Manatuto and Liquica. This included providing electronic tablets to school leaders to improve communication and access to curriculum materials, together with training - all designed to help improve the quality of teaching.

05 Progressed work with the PNTL to assess new Maritime Police Post capabilities and commenced fit out of a new Police Forensics laboratory through our Police Development Program. Supporting the PNTL's forensic capabilities will provide better investigative outcomes and support victims of crime through enhanced evidence identification techniques.

06 Maintained high-level engagement including at leaders' level. In a phone call in August Australia's Foreign Minister Marise Payne and her counterpart Foreign Minister Adaljiza Magno discussed our shared economic recovery from the pandemic, and support for the acceleration of Timor-Leste's vaccine rollout with more than 577,000 COVID-19 vaccine doses so far delivered from Australia. Australia will continue to support the Ministry of Health as this important rollout continues across the country.



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