



24 April 2020

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



I hope you found the first edition of our COVID-19 newsletter informative. Since I last wrote there have been a number of developments including more cases in Timor-Leste. It's a challenging situation but I can assure you that Australia is here to keep working with Timor-Leste.

I am pleased to report that there has been a great amount of progress since Easter. We are working with the Timor-Leste Government, the WHO, NGOs and other partners to support the COVID-19 response. And in Canberra, DFAT's Timor-Leste section and Ambassador Inês Almeida are participating in weekly meetings to update all countries on the ongoing assistance Australia is providing to Timor-Leste and the Pacific in response to COVID-19.

You have probably been keeping up with news on our Facebook page. But I'll mention some of the key achievements here.

### In the past fortnight Australia has:

- 01 Allocated AUD 10 million in extra funding to help Timor-Leste fight COVID-19. This is in addition to Australia's annual AUD 100 million development partnership, which we are also redirecting in support of Timor-Leste's COVID-19 response. We are working closely with the Timor-Leste Government on using these additional resources.
- 02 Supported the opening of the Vera Cruz isolation facility. This critical piece of infrastructure enables COVID-19 patients to receive the support they need, while keeping the community safe from further infection.
- 03 Extended further funding to NGO Maluk Timor to facilitate training for more than 1,000 healthcare workers across every district of Timor-Leste.
- 04 Verified more than 300 COVID-19 tests run by the Timor-Leste National Laboratory at the Royal Darwin Hospital. Working together with the Menzies School of Health Research and the Royal Darwin Hospital, the National Laboratory is continuously improving its testing capability, enabling the Ministry of Health to monitor and respond to the epidemic in real time.
- 05 Through the Timor-Leste Police Development Program, the Australian Federal Police has supplied equipment to help the PNTL perform their frontline duties, including patrolling the border.





06 Helped to support the most vulnerable by providing additional funding for shelters for women and children experiencing domestic violence. Through our Nabilan program, we have established infection control measures for shelters to keep people safe, and promoted public health messages including referral services.

07 Rolled out a distance learning package for F-FDTL students at the English Language Training Facility at Metinaro and supported the F-FDTL to maintain operational readiness by assisting with generator repairs at the base in Baucau.

08 Established a new handwashing station at the community health centre in Becora, Dili. This is just the first of 30 new water tanks which will be delivered to communities around Timor-Leste as part of the Australian-funded PARTISIPA program.

Tomorrow we will commemorate Anzac Day, a national day of remembrance in Australia and New Zealand. In honour of our shared military history, many Timorese usually join us for a dawn service. This year our commemorations will be different, with the respects paid individually. Although we will be separate, I am sure we will find ways to express our solidarity.



We all need to continue to play our part on COVID-19 – staying home wherever possible, practicing social distancing, and maintaining high levels of personal hygiene. Each one of us has a role to play in preventing the spread of COVID-19 and saving lives.