5 June 2020

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

Welcome to Edition 5 of our COVID-19 newsletter. I am pleased to note that no new cases of COVID-19 have been detected in Timor-Leste over the past few weeks, meaning that Timor-Leste has maintained its status as having no known active cases. An extraordinary achievement and one that Timor-Leste, the Ministry of Health, frontline workers and all of Timor-Leste's partners including the World Health Organization can be justifiably proud.

It has been heartening to see some workplaces and businesses slowly begin to resume operations, with strict hygiene measures in place. It is critical that we stay focused on prevention and preparation to avoid a second wave of infections.

In addition to assisting Timor-Leste to address the health components of COVID-19, Australia is also helping to mitigate the significant economic impacts. Through targeted fiscal measures Australia is helping Timor-Leste to alleviate the financial hardship caused by COVID-19 and supporting economic recovery.

## In the past fortnight Australia has:

01 Signed a new AUD7 million agreement to strengthen community resilience and economic recovery. These funds will go straight to villages throughout Timor-Leste – creating jobs, stimulating local economic activity, and building critical infrastructure such as water, sanitation and irrigation systems. The funds will be delivered through Timor-Leste's National Program for Village Development (PNDS), which improves living standards by enabling communities to select and build small-scale infrastructure projects themselves.

02 Supported the Ministry of Social Solidarity and Inclusion with final preparations to deliver emergency financial payments to low-income households. Australia has provided more than AUD850,000 to support logistics, training and the design of new systems to enable these vital payments to be made to households all over Timor-Leste.

03 Helped local businesses to adapt to opportunities presented by COVID-19. With support from Australia's Market Development Facility Timor-Leste's first garment factory – Mahanaim Garment and Manufacturing – was able to start making cloth masks in response to market demand.

04 Provided an extra AUD500,000 through Australia's TOMAK program to support food security, nutrition and livelihoods in response to COVID-19. Our support will boost local agricultural production so there is more nutritious food for people to eat and for farmers to sell at markets.

**05** Focused on getting people back to work safely. For example, through Australia's rural roads support program we are working with the Ministry of Public Works to support COVID-19 workplace safety and good hygiene practices on road worksites.

**06** Ensured that Australian volunteers are able to continue their important work in support of partner organisations in Timor-Leste by launching the Remote Volunteering initiative. This enables volunteers who have been temporarily repatriated to Australia to work remotely.

**07** Through the Defence Cooperation Program, Australia has assisted the F-FDTL to perform its security responsibilities under the State of Emergency by helping to repair essential services at the Baucau military base, and providing advice on new security posts at the border.

Thanks for continuing to stay informed and active in response to COVID-19. Our next newsletter will be at the end of June. Until then stay safe and thanks to everyone for their contribution to the collective effort to fight COVID-19.

### Hana Silva

Hana Silva from Lautem municipality is one of more than 1,100 Timorese currently working in Australia as part of our labour mobility schemes. Hana has been supported to continue her employment in Australia during COVID-19. When she returns to Timor-Leste she plans to use her new skills to open her own business.

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