



Australian Embassy  
Timor-Leste

# COVID-19



29 June 2020

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



It has now been more than three months since the first case of COVID-19 was detected in Timor-Leste. Timor-Leste's swift response – enacting a State of Emergency, closing its borders, standing up quarantine and isolation facilities, and implementing a testing regime – put it in a strong position.

The initial response period is now drawing to a close. Timor-Leste has seen all 24 confirmed cases recovered, and no new cases identified for several weeks. The successful management of this initial phase has created time to prepare for future outbreaks.

Australia, along with many other partners including the World Health Organization, has been proud to have worked closely with Timor-Leste during this time.

### Highlights of our partnership during this time include:

- 01 Supported over AUD1.3 million in infrastructure upgrades at the Vera Cruz, Tasi Tolu and Tibar isolation facilities. These facilities are essential to contain COVID-19, helping people who test positive to recover safely separate from the community. Thanks to technical partners at the Ministry of Health, WHO, Maluku Timor and St John of God.
- 02 Establishing an independent COVID-19 testing capability which allows the Ministry of Health to monitor the epidemic in real time. The Menzies School of Health Research worked with the National Health Laboratory to build this capability, which has seen more than 2,000 tests conducted in Timor-Leste. Collaboration with the Royal Darwin Hospital will continue.
- 03 The delivery of several shipments of personal protective equipment (PPE) and medical equipment including oxygen regulators and patient vital sign monitors for use at the National Hospital and isolation facilities. This equipment supports patient care, while ensuring the safety of frontline staff.
- 04 Providing additional funding for NGOs including Maluku Timor to deliver training to improve the skills of Timorese health workers to prevent and control infections like COVID-19. Training has been conducted at health clinics right across the country and will have long-term benefits after COVID-19 has passed.



05 An additional AUD7 million to Timor-Leste's National Program for Village Development (PNDS) to create jobs and stimulate local economic activity. This funding will enable one-third of communities in Timor-Leste to build critical infrastructure, such as water and irrigation systems.

06 Facilitating the delivery of cash payments to families by providing technical and practical support to the Ministry of Social Solidarity and Inclusion. Australia provided more than AUD850,000 to support logistics, training and the design of new systems to enable these payments to be made.

07 Building community resilience through an additional AUD5 million provided through the Australian Humanitarian Partnership. This assistance will focus on livelihoods, food security, nutrition, health promotion, education, water, sanitation and hygiene – all designed to help mitigate social impacts and promote economic recovery.

08 Steps taken to promote community safety. The Australian Federal Police has supported the PNTL by constructing a temporary police station at a quarantine site, setting up hand-washing stations, and providing equipment to assist the UPF to conduct border patrols.

COVID-19 has seen Australia and Timor-Leste working closer together than ever before. So much has been achieved – more than we can detail here. There is still a lot of work to be done, and as friends and neighbours, Australia and Timor-Leste will continue working side-by-side.



09 Strong support from Australia's Defence Cooperation Program for the F-FDTL's security response. This included providing defence advisers for the Integrated Crisis Management Centre, and assistance to maintain operational readiness and communications systems.

10 New measures to prioritise the welfare and safety of Timorese workers and students in Australia. Australia has put in place new visa arrangements to extend their stay, assisted Timorese workers to find new employment, and provided additional support services.

11 Ongoing close contact between our leaders, including at the Prime Minister, Foreign Minister and Defence Minister level. By maintaining direct communication at the highest levels, Australia's support remains responsive to Timor-Leste's priorities.



A Rua Mártires da Pátria, Dili, Timor-Leste

E [austemb\\_dili@dfat.gov.au](mailto:austemb_dili@dfat.gov.au) | P (670) 3322 111 | F (670) 332 2247

 @AustralianEmbassyTimorLeste  Peter Roberts @AusAmbDili



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