



Aileu-Moreland-Hume: The Friendship that Binds Us

**A History of the Hume/Moreland Friendship
Relationship with Aileu, Timor-Leste**

Friends of Aileu

Linking Moreland and
Hume communities
with Aileu, Timor-Leste.



Moreland
City Council





Foreword

We are delighted to present this brief history of the friendship relationship between the Moreland and Hume City Councils and their communities and the Municipality and people of Aileu, Timor-Leste.

Our Councils are proud to have been amongst the first Australian local governments that responded to the idea, promoted by Mr Abél Guterres (CNRT representative in Melbourne) and the VLGA's Rae Perry (now Kingsbury), of forming a friendship relationship with a counterpart in Timor-Leste.

In the late 1990s, in the wake of the Victorian Government's amalgamation of Councils, the value of local democracy and the importance of social justice were very much in the mind of councillors and community members.

In August 1999, the people of East Timor voted in a UN-sanctioned Popular Consultation and chose independence from Indonesia, following 24 years of violent occupation and in the face of intense intimidation from military and militias. The widespread killing and destruction they visited on the people of East Timor as they reluctantly gave up control was witnessed by many, including Australian local government observers of the Popular Consultation.

An MOU establishing the friendship relationship was signed in May 2000, when East Timor's resistance leader Xanana Gusmão delivered the 13th Blackburn Oration in the Coburg Town Hall on *The Importance of Community Alliances in the Re-building of East Timor*.

This relationship has been periodically renewed, most recently by the signing last year of the Friendship Agreement 2020. We look forward to the relationship continuing to grow over the coming years.

Early leadership in establishing the friendship relationship and forming the Friends of Aileu was provided by Moreland Councillor, the late Andy Ingham, and Hume Mayor, the late Gary Jungwirth. These

initiatives were enthusiastically embraced and supported by other councillors and many community members.

The contribution of community members to this journey of friendship should not be underestimated. While all who contributed are not named, this history is part of their story and illustrates the impact of their dedicated contributions over the years.

We commend this history as way to remember and celebrate the achievements in support of local democracy and community development in Aileu that the relationship has facilitated. We also commend it as a celebration of the friendships developed by Councillors, staff, community members of the Friends of Aileu and representatives of our local partner organisation with local government and community members in Aileu.

Cr Annalivia Carli Hannan
Mayor, Moreland City Council

Cr Joseph Haweil
Mayor, Hume City Council

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www.moreland.vic.gov.au/community-health/advocacy-services/friends-of-aileu/
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Background

The Colonial Period

Portuguese traders first arrived on the island of Timor in 1515 and were later followed by missionaries, initially establishing themselves in the area around Lifau, Oecusse. The Portuguese began to forge trading relations with local rulers throughout the eastern part of Timor. The first Portuguese governor was appointed in 1702, and in 1769 the capital was moved from Lifau to Dili. Meanwhile the Dutch had gained control over most of the western portion of the island. The border between Dutch West Timor and Portuguese East Timor was formalised over the period 1859 to 1916, and Portuguese colonial influence gradually expanded across more of the interior of East Timor. The East Timorese resisted this colonisation, most notably in the Great Manufahi War from 1908 to 1912. This rebellion led by Dom Bonaventura claimed the lives of an estimated 15,000–25,000 Timorese—5 per cent of the then colony's population of 400,000.¹

On 17 December 1941, ten days after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbour and in the wake of the rapid Japanese advances throughout the region including in the Dutch East Indies, a small force of Australian and Dutch troops invaded neutral Portuguese East Timor. The following February, the Japanese invaded both West Timor and East Timor in force. The Australian commandos—with the aid of young Timorese boys (known as *criado* or servant)—conducted a guerrilla-style campaign of resistance and harassment but were evacuated in February 1943, promising the Timorese as they left, 'We will never forget you'.

The Japanese remained in occupation of Timor until the end of World War II. The hostilities in East Timor cost the lives of an estimated 40,000–70,000 East Timorese, mostly civilians but including combatants recruited by the Japanese and Australian forces. The Portuguese regained control of East Timor after the Japanese surrender, and West Timor became part of the independent Republic of Indonesia, declared in 1945 and effectively established in 1949 following a protracted struggle against the Dutch.

The Carnation Revolution in Portugal in April 1974 led to tentative steps towards decolonisation and to political parties being formed in East Timor. However, further turmoil in Portugal in 1975 reduced its ability to manage the decolonisation process and political tensions inside East Timor. Cold War political considerations, heightened following the capture of Saigon by the North Vietnamese and Viet Cong forces in April 1975, encouraged Indonesia to intervene in East Timor and muted the international responses to Indonesian interference.

Following the attack by UDT (Union for a Democratic Timor) on Fretilin (Revolutionary Front for an Independent East Timor) in August 1975, the Portuguese administration withdrew from Dili, and Fretilin subsequently won a brief civil war. With Portugal unable to reassert control and Indonesia escalating its interference, including armed incursions from September, Fretilin declared independence on 28 November 1975.

The Indonesian Invasion, Occupation and Resistance

This independence was short-lived, however; on 7 December 1975, Indonesia invaded and shortly afterwards annexed the country as its 27th province, but these actions were not sanctioned by the United Nations.

The period of Indonesian occupation was marked by violence, repression and famine, and an estimated 200,000 people died. Fretilin continued to conduct a resistance movement using its armed wing, Falantil (Armed Forces of National Liberation of East Timor) led by Xanana Gusmão from 1981. Although Gusmão was captured in 1992 and imprisoned until 1999, the guerrilla operations continued.

Timorese outside of East Timor lobbied other nations for a plebiscite on their future, and Australian solidarity groups supported this international network. However, it was not until 1991 that the shocking video of the massacre of over 250 people at the Santa Cruz cemetery in Dili brought wider attention to Timor's struggle for independence. In 1996, acting bishop of Dili, Carlos Belo, and resistance leader José Ramos-Horta were jointly awarded the Nobel Peace Prize, further raising international awareness of the East Timorese independence struggle.

Popular Consultation, UNAMET, INTERFET and UMTAET

In 1999, following international pressure and a change of leadership in Indonesia, Portugal and Indonesia agreed that the United Nations should administer a Popular Consultation Ballot, so that the East Timorese could vote on whether they wanted to be part of Indonesia or become an independent nation. The United Nations Mission in East Timor (UNAMET) was established for this purpose, with Indonesia remaining responsible for security.

In Melbourne, these developments were watched with interest. The Victorian Local Governance Association (VLGA) became involved. At the time, the VLGA was a relatively new peak body representing councils around the state and was particularly interested in good governance. The organisation's CEO, former Moreland councillor, Mike Hill, had a long-standing interest in overseas aid projects. Rae Perry (later Kingsbury) was a councillor of the City of Darebin and became passionately interested in the promotion of democracy in East Timor. She and Mike Hill advocated for the VLGA to become involved.

Victorian local governments had not traditionally been much concerned with international matters, but, after what was described as 'active and robust debate',² the VLGA agreed to send Cr Perry as its representative on the Australian Official Delegation headed by the Hon. Tim Fischer to observe the ballot. Ninety-nine per cent of East Timor's citizens voted in the ballot held on 30 August 1999, with 78 per cent supporting independence. The Indonesian authorities were forced to pull out. They did so, leaving a terrible legacy of destruction. Anti-independence militia, assisted by the Indonesian army, conducted a campaign of terror in which an estimated 1,500 people were killed and a quarter of the population was relocated, mostly forcibly, to West Timor. About 70 per cent of the buildings and infrastructure of the country was destroyed.

Indonesia was pressured to accept intervention by a UN-sponsored Australian-led peacekeeping force (INTERFET), which arrived on 20 September 1999 and gradually restored order. By 31 October the Indonesian military had withdrawn and most of the militia had fled to West Timor. The Indonesian parliament subsequently recognised the results of the referendum.

In October 1999, Xanana Gusmão was released and the UN Transitional Administration in East Timor (UNTAET) was established. East Timor was finally on the road to independence, but in a parlous state following the years of repression and war.

1 Frédéric Durand, *East Timor: A Country at the Crossroads of Asia and the Pacific: A Geo-historical Atlas*, Bangkok, Silkworm Books, 2006, quoted in Robert Muggah (ed.), *Urban Violence in an Urban Village: A Case Study of Dili, Timor-Leste*, Geneva, Geneva Secretariat, 2010.

2 Rae Perry, *Victorian Local Governments and East Timor Friendships*, 2002.

Aileu

The District (now municipality) of Aileu is located south of the capital, Dili, in the mountains at around 900 metres above sea level. The climate is much cooler than on the coast and can be quite cold and wet in winter.

At the time of independence, most of the 50,000-plus population of Aileu District were poor subsistence farmers. The district lacked most basic facilities and services and more or less had to start from scratch after the devastation of the Indonesian years. Schools were mainly staffed by volunteers and had no books or equipment, the health services were rudimentary and lacked trained

personnel, and infrastructure such as roads, power and water supply were rudimentary or non-existent. The hills were sparsely wooded, largely due to deforestation during the Indonesian period, when trees were chopped down and used for fuel; no one was allowed to use kerosene for heating, lighting or cooking, as it was regarded as a potential weapon. Consequently, the hills were subject to erosion and the local roads were frequently washed out. A sealed road to Dili has now been established, but after independence the trip from Dili to Aileu was very difficult and hazardous.⁴



Friendship Relationships

The Beginnings

Many people in Australia were deeply disturbed by the situation in East Timor. The East Timorese had assisted in the defence of Australia during World War II, and there had been trenchant opposition to the Australian government’s recognition of the Indonesian takeover in 1975. There was a strong feeling that we had an obligation to assist our neighbours in this time of great need.

In addition, a number of East Timorese were now living in Australia. Some refugees had arrived during and in the aftermath of World War II, and there was a stream arriving before and during the Indonesian occupation. Abel Guterres was part of a cohort that had arrived in the 1970s, and by 1999 he was the official representative of the East Timorese Council for Timorese National Resistance (CNRT) in Southern Australia. In 1999 over 4,000 East Timorese were granted extended residency in Australia on humanitarian grounds. Many made their homes in Hume and Moreland.

In late 1999 Abel Guterres, approached Darebin, Moreland and Port Phillip councils to establish ‘friendship’ relationships with towns in East Timor. Many local governments in Australia had set up ‘sister city’ relationships with comparable communities in other countries, but these were often perceived as a pretext for elected representatives and staff to travel at public expense. Guterres had a more useful arrangement in mind, but neither he nor the Victorian councils had a clear idea of what this might be.⁵

In May 2000, the framework for the friendship arrangements was clarified and set in place. The Statement of Principles for Victorian Local Governments Working in East

Timor⁶ was signed by Xanana Gusmão (by now, the president of CNRT), the Victorian minister for local government in the Bracks government, the Hon. Bob Cameron, the president of the VLGA, Cr Julie Hansen, and the president of the Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV), Cr Bob Matheson. Friendship relationships were to be based on mutual respect and broad community involvement on both sides.

Moreland’s Involvement

In Moreland, the idea was taken up with enthusiasm. Like nearly all the local governments in Victoria, Moreland City Council was a relatively new organisation. In 1994, almost all councils had been dismissed by the Jeff Kennett-led state government. A major restructure of the sector took place, with 210 local governments replaced by 78 larger entities managed by government-appointed commissioners. Elections for the new councils were held in 1996 and councillors were still finding their feet in 1999. Moreland City Council had a reputation for radicalism and was dubbed ‘The Peoples’ Republic of Moreland’ by the minister for planning. It was ready to take on the friendship arrangement as a new project. The main advocate on the council was Councillor Andy Ingham, and he was largely responsible for Moreland’s enthusiastic adoption of the project. Andy died in 2001 at the age of 46 but has left an enduring legacy in the friendship arrangement.

Abel Guterres matched up Aileu with Moreland and Hume. He said he chose Aileu because both it and the Melbourne municipalities were inland rather than seaside communities.⁷

3 J. Patrick Fischer, at <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=5593394>.
4 Information from Building Community Friendship Relationships with Timor-Leste, Presentation to Moreland UTAH on Monday 19 October 2020, by Richard Brown.

5 Ibid.
6 <https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=&ved=2ahUKEwiHqfOKz8LtAhUVwjgG-Hcm3AiMQFjAAegQIARAC&url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.moreland.vic.gov.au%2Fglobalassets%2F-friends-of-aileu%2Fstatement-of-principles-for-victorian-local-governments-working-in-east-timor.rtf&usg=AOv-Vaw33opm1Pg2n7FPwv5O3b8bj>.
7 Email to Chris Adams 21 December 2020.

STATEMENT OF PRINCIPLES

FOR VICTORIAN LOCAL GOVERNMENTS WORKING IN EAST TIMOR

In recognition of East Timor as an independent nation and in acknowledgment of the struggles of the heroic people of East Timor, the people of Victoria through their representatives in local government and the people of East Timor through their representatives in the National Council of Timorese Resistance (CNRT) hereby agree that:

- ◆ A lasting friendship shall be built on a partnership of mutual respect; this friendship shall at all times respect and value local as well as national cultures and decision-making processes;
- ◆ Local governments and organisations at a community level have expertise and experience in caring for and developing local communities;
- ◆ The knowledge and expertise of local governments in Victoria shall be shared through partnerships with the people of East Timor;
- ◆ This agreement welcomes East Timor as a close neighbour of Australia at all levels of democratic government.
- ◆ Material contributions by local governments in Victoria to the re-building of the nation of East Timor shall most effectively be provided in consultation and co-operation with the local as well as national representatives of the people of East Timor;
- ◆ Recognising the need to supplement the contribution of the United Nations, other international agencies and non-government organisations the parties now wish to implement community to community partnerships; and
- ◆ We shall respect and honour the efforts of all those Victorians and East Timorese who in a spirit of democratic endeavour work to improve the quality of life of their communities.

Signed this day 4 May 2000

Xanana
Xanana Gusmao
PRESIDENT CNRT



Julie Hansen
Cr Julie Hansen
PRESIDENT VLGA



Cr Brad Matheson
Cr Brad Matheson
PRESIDENT MAV



Bob Cameron
Hon Bob Cameron MP
MINISTER FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT
VICTORIA

Statement of Principles
2000

Friends of Aileu Community Committee Established

Coburg resident Jane Ellen responded to an advertisement by Moreland City Council in the local newspaper early in 2000 asking for community volunteers to join the Friends of Aileu Community Committee. Alongside Jane, other foundation members included Teresa Garcia, Bert King, Christine Hooper, Pat Burchell, Carmelina Zammit, Ross Parks, Paul Scully and Olga Kimpton. Rosalie Sword, whose daughter Kirsty would later marry Xanana Gusmao, joined soon after and provided useful contacts. The committee met for the first time on 29 March 2000.

In April, the CNRT Australian Office invited Moreland to send a delegation to Aileu to assess the situation and make contact with local people. Andy Ingham and Jane Ellen were nominated as the delegation.⁸ The trip was organised at very short notice. Jane spent all of one day obtaining a new passport in time to leave. The pair spent a very long day travelling to Dili with stops in Adelaide, Alice Springs and Darwin. On arrival, they were met by a former Falantil soldier, Eduardo Belo Soares, and taken to stay at his house.

Andy and Jane were shocked by the sight of Dili on the drive from the airport. There were no lights and people gathered around small fires by the side of the road. Eduardo and his wife shared the house with a number of family members and other people. Next morning, they were awakened early by roosters crowing. Andy was well known in Moreland for objecting to residents keeping roosters, which would wake him, so he was vociferous in his complaints!

A four-wheel drive vehicle and driver had been organised to take them to Aileu. Although Aileu township is less than 50 km from Dili, the trip took two hours owing to the poor state of the roads and the mountainous terrain. Burnt-out villages were everywhere, and Jane had the impression that the whole population was traumatised. Andy wrote in his diary: 'I feel quite depressed by the

amount of destruction. These people have nothing left. Nothing'.

Most of the buildings in Aileu had been destroyed. Fortunately, the surrounding coffee plantations had survived and had merely been abandoned by their Indonesian former owners. Local people were working on the plantations and harvesting the crop. The local market was still operating and there was a small café selling simple meals.

Jane and Andy stayed at the office of the UNTAET district administrator, John Bevan. A number of European and Australian aid workers were also in town assessing needs, and there was a contingent of Australian Federal Police. Aileu had been a military stronghold during the Indonesian occupation and had a large barracks building, now occupied by Falantil. Under an agreement with the UN, Falantil soldiers had been allowed to keep their arms and act as peacekeepers for the area. Jane and Andy met the Falantil leader, Taur Matan Ruak, who is now the prime minister of Timor-Leste. Jane remembers him as a fierce-looking individual with hair down to his waist. Falantil soldiers apparently thought that long hair would provide them with protection.



Moreland Cr Andy Ingham in Aileu, April 2000

The delegation spent three days in Aileu. They spoke to the district administrator, the Australian Federal Police contingent, aid workers and local people about the needs of the community. They spent time with Kate McIlwain, who was the Aileu

⁸ Information about the trip from a conversation with Jane Ellen on 12 October 2020, supplemented by Andy Ingham's diary of the trip found in Moreland Council papers. File 110/010/51 Part 2

district field officer for UNTAET, and who had been assigned to show them around and act as their interpreter. With Kate, they visited the hilltop town of Maubisse. They also established contact with the Sisters of Maryknoll—nuns from an American order who had been working in Aileu since 1991 following seventeen years work in Indonesia and had stayed during and after the Indonesian occupation. The nuns put in a particular request for seeds so that crops could be planted.

Andy went off on a motorbike with various Falantil fighters while Jane stayed in town talking to local women. She knew a smattering of Portuguese and was fluent in Spanish, and this enabled her to communicate with them. In the local café, they met a man who claimed to have infiltrated the Indonesian Air Force and passed information on to Falantil. Back in Dili, they spent more time talking to local people and visited the Xanana Gusmão Reading Room—then in the process of being set up—with Kirsty Sword.

They returned to Melbourne inspired by the beauty of the country and by the kindness, friendliness and bravery of the East Timorese people, as well as by the evident need for resources of every kind. Money to buy basic equipment and supplies was the most urgent need.

Hume’s Involvement

Hume City Council’s involvement with the friendship agreement was largely a result of the enthusiasm of the then mayor, Cr Gary Jungwirth. Gary would continue to be a strong advocate for Aileu until his untimely death in 2019.

Moreland Council had written to Hume on 6 April 2000 and formally invited it to become part of the friendship arrangement; this was endorsed at a council meeting on 10 April.

Hume is a very different community from Moreland. It covers a vast area and encompasses middle-ring suburbs, developing outer suburbs and rural areas. Support for participation in the friendship

arrangement was not unanimous in the council, but Hume councillors, council staff and members of the community went on to participate with enthusiasm.

Xanana Gusmão Speaks in Moreland

Xanana Gusmão was invited to give the annual Maurice Blackburn Oration at Coburg Town Hall on 4 May 2000. The oration is in honour of, and funded by a bequest from, the former local member of federal parliament, Maurice Blackburn, and his wife Doris. Both Blackburns were strongly committed to social justice principles, so the oration always reflects this.

The title of the oration was ‘The Importance of Community Alliances in the Rebuilding of East Timor’. Xanana delivered a strong message of hope for the new country and appealed to the people of Moreland and Hume to support the fledgling nation as it faced its next struggle to rebuild after the destruction left behind by the Indonesians and the struggle to help lift the people out of poverty.

While at Coburg Town Hall, Xanana signed a memorandum of understanding with Moreland and Hume City Councils⁹, setting the basis for the arrangement with Aileu.



Hume Mayor Cr Gary Jungwirth, Moreland Mayor Cr Stella Kariofyllidis and Xanana Gusmão with MOU, May 2000

⁹ <https://activemoreland.com.au/about-us/your-council/friendship-cities/>

Memorandum of Understanding

The Cities of Moreland and Hume through their local governments recognise the CNRT (National Council of Timorese Resistance) as representative of the East Timorese people and acknowledge UNTAET (United Nations Transitional Administration of East Timor) as the interim governing authority of East Timor under the United Nations mandate on behalf of the people of East Timor.

The people of Moreland and Hume and the people of Aileu agree to enter into a Friendship City relationship to assist the rebuilding of Aileu and the restoration of local democracy. The friendship between Moreland, Hume and Aileu is based on respect for local decision-making and local autonomy. Moreland and Hume recognise the need for long-term and short-term assistance for the community of Aileu.

Moreland and Hume will work to facilitate and obtain resources for agreed projects within Aileu. Moreland and Hume will liaise with the leadership of the CNRT to reach agreement on projects. Moreland and Hume will liaise with UNTAET in Aileu to ensure coordination.

The CNRT in Aileu will ensure that its community is consulted and informed on projects. The CNRT will acknowledge Moreland and Hume’s support for agreed projects. The CNRT will from time to time as agreed, provide documentation on projects.

Upon election of the local government of Aileu, Moreland and Hume will renegotiate this agreement with the elected local government of Aileu.

Dated this 4th day of May 2000



Memorandum of Understanding

A Journey of Friendship

Emergency Response Activities in 2000

The Friends of Aileu Community Committee then began its work. Council officers, Jo Lindley and Michael LaPorta from Moreland, and Genia Sawczyn from Hume, were assigned to the project. Yvonne Adami was appointed as a project officer, working three days a week from March until October, with funding from Moreland City Council.

At this early stage, the committee recognised that the need for physical donations must take priority, as the people of Aileu had very little of anything. An early initiative was an appeal for blankets and children's winter clothes. Although Aileu is in the tropics, its high altitude means it can be cold and damp in the wet season. Moreland residents responded enthusiastically but not always thoughtfully, and committee members spent many hours sorting through a mountain of donated clothing—nearly all of which was unsuitable. A number of treadle sewing machines were also donated and these were of more use. Transporting items to East Timor was a huge problem and Rotary stepped in to assist. Eventually more than a tonne of clothing was sent.



Aileu Week, Lee Norris, Cr Kariofyllidis, Kirsty Sword Gusmao and Rae Perry

Aileu Week was organised for 28 August – 3 September 2000, and the focus was community awareness and fundraising. Breakfast and dinner events were held on 30 August—the first anniversary of the East Timorese independence ballot. Food and drink for these events was donated by local suppliers.

The project officer, Yvonne Adami, worked with local schools to raise awareness of East Timor and involved students in assembling backpacks with stationery and other items for East Timorese children. Friendship relationships were established between schools in Hume and Moreland and schools in the Aileu District.

Coffee sales were launched during the week. This was largely an initiative of committee member, Lachlan McKenzie. He worked in the coffee industry and facilitated an agreement with Coffex Coffee, whereby beans were imported from East Timor, roasted, ground and packaged by Coffex and sold at council customer service centres and other outlets. This raised funds as well as providing a market for Aileu produce.

A partnership was formed with the Brunswick Bicycle Users' Group, Black Rose Bicycle Group, Ceres Bike Group and others. Volunteers from the groups collected unwanted bikes and refurbished them.



An early material aid delivery arrives in Aileu

A shipment of 120 bikes was sent to Aileu and more were sold to raise funds.

Other items sent to Aileu in this period included used computers and medical supplies, and \$1,200 worth of seeds, which had been requested by the nuns of Maryknoll.¹⁰ Rowan Mitchell, who was running a program in Dili providing East Timorese people with refurbished computers, was driving a truck to Darwin for shipping to East Timor, and it was arranged that he would also take boxes of goods to deliver to Aileu. In August, it was reported that these had arrived.

Activities in Aileu Week raised over \$11,000.¹¹ A partnership with Australian Volunteers International (AVI) was also set up so that people could make tax deductible donations to the Aileu appeal.

A Change in Focus in 2001

The committee was very active in 2001 with more than twenty people regularly attending monthly meetings. In December 2000, Jim Anderson was appointed as project officer on a seven-month contract. He had a background in working with Indigenous communities in Australia, as well as with people in Sri Lanka and East Timor. He stayed in the position for only about three months.

In March, Rae Perry was appointed as project officer, bringing her immense knowledge, enthusiasm and experience to the position. She had worked tirelessly through the VLGA to encourage the setting up of friendship agreements, so was the ideal person to take on the project officer position at Moreland.

By this time, the committee was moving on from sending goods to Aileu, although some shipments continued. Goods were no longer in such short supply and there were substantial logistical difficulties in getting them transported. The committee acknowledged that it did not have the

resources for large infrastructure projects but looked for smaller initiatives and the setting up of partnerships.¹²

Six subcommittees were established to cover community awareness, festivals, coffee, schools, hospital and medical services, and sustainable energy. All these worked in their respective areas on small projects in Melbourne and in Aileu.

In April, Gary Jungwirth and Wayne Harvey, director of corporate services at Hume City Council, visited Aileu. The purposes of this trip were to re-establish relationships with the East Timorese leadership in Aileu, identify the needs of the community, and invite the district administrator, Senora Maria da Costa da Paixão, to visit Hume and Moreland. This visit took place in December 2001.



District Administrator Mrs Maria Paixao with East Timorese community members

In 2001 local film maker and member of the Friends of Aileu Community Committee, Joan Robinson, released a film *One Day in Fatulai*, which she had made in Aileu the previous year. This recorded a day spent with Dr Colette Livermore, who was working in Aileu as a volunteer. She is shown travelling to the remote village of Fatulai to conduct a general medical and TB clinic. The film shows the huge medical problems suffered by people in the village, including TB and severe malnutrition in children. Fatulai is accessible only in the dry season so for half the year they had no medical help at all.

¹⁰ Moreland City Council Councillor Communique, 11 October 2000.

¹¹ Summary of the achievements of Aileu Week from a report to Moreland Council by the Director of Governance and Information Management (Jo Lindley), 11 September 2000. Report No DGI40

¹² Michael LaPorta, A document describing the work of the committee, January 2001, Moreland Council, File 110/010/51, Part 5.

2002

In April 2002, Gary Jungwirth visited East Timor again as part of the VLGA/MAV delegation to observe the presidential election. He also visited Aileu and met with Maria Paixão once again.



VLGA / MAV observer group members for presidential election 2002

The partnership with AVI was further developed, and an AVI teacher volunteer, Vicki Day, was sent to Aileu. She was appointed on an initial twelve-month contract to teach English to post-secondary students and administrators, working at the Catholic High School, which was managed by the Maryknoll Sisters. Vicki stayed there for more than two years and was the first of a number of volunteers auspiced by AVI, with supporting funds from Friends of Aileu.

Conditions in Aileu at this time were very tough, and there were constant problems with electricity and water supplies. Glenda Lasslett, AVI country manager for Timor-Leste, has said she was astounded by the grit and determination of the volunteers. By this stage, a number of friendship agreements between Victorian councils and areas of East Timor had been established.

The Cr Andy Ingham—Aileu Scholarship Project was established in 2002 as a memorial to Andy Ingham. The idea for a scholarship scheme had been suggested by Vicki Day, who had commenced raising money for it. Much of the fund-raising effort of the community committee was directed towards the scholarships from this date. During the first year (2003–04) seven students from Aileu attending universities in East Timor had their tuition and living expenses paid for by the scholarships. All did well, and their scholarships were extended.¹³

2003

A report on the schools' project in April 2003 recorded six Moreland schools participating in partnership with the councils, the Alola Foundation in Dili and the Education Foundation (an independent, volunteer-supported, not-for-profit organisation). Moreland schools would be paired with schools in Aileu with the objective of increasing understanding of different cultures on both sides and the Moreland schools identifying particular projects to assist their East Timorese counterparts. Schools raised money, which was used to purchase sports equipment, musical instruments and other items requested by the Aileu schools. Students exchanged letters and photos.

In October a Friends of Aileu delegation visited Aileu. The delegation included Rae Perry and Moreland mayor, Cr Joe Caputo. They met various partner representatives including Mario Soares, who was the friendship liaison officer, and Maryknoll sisters, Dorothy McGowan and Susan Gubbins. They also visited several schools. The delegation then travelled to Baucau to participate in the 'Towards Decentralisation' planning conference with delegates from other friendship groups and representatives of their respective districts.



Project Officer Rae Perry and AVI Vicki Day visiting an Aileu school



Friends of Aileu member Glenyys Romanes with members of the original Aileu Friendship commission



Moreland Mayor Cr Anthony Helou, Mr Mario Soares and Cr Joe Caputo

2004

Early in 2004 the Aileu Friendship Commission was established under the leadership of Mario Soares, acting deputy district administrator, and Antonio Belo, acting district administrator. The commission included representatives of government departments in Aileu and the main women's group in the community. The commission was designed to be the main contact point for the project officers on their annual visits to ensure government and community input into the Friends of Aileu projects.

Glenyys and Graham Romanes visited Aileu in July and met with the commission. The idea of a study centre, which would become the Aileu Resource and Training Centre, was first mooted during this visit.

Mario Soares visited Melbourne for three weeks in April/May 2004. At the meeting

of the Friends of Aileu Community Committee on 4 May 2004, he presented a letter from the commission regarding the friendship relationship. It proposed to establish a memorandum of understanding between the commission and the Friends of Aileu Community Committee. This was subsequently drawn up as a friendship agreement and was signed by the incoming district administrator and the two mayors in 2005, replacing the MoU originally signed by Xanana Gusmão in 2000.

In 2004, a partnership was formed with the Alternative Technology Association (ATA) to work with the local authorities in Aileu to set up small solar power systems. Mick Harris from the ATA had come up with the idea of installing such systems in developing countries and focused on East Timor as a country of a manageable size with links to Australia. He spoke to Rae Perry and they formed the link with Friends of Aileu. The friends contributed a seeding grant of \$1000, and donations of equipment were received from a number of technology companies. A team of six people from ATA visited Aileu where they installed five solar lighting systems in various government and community buildings and instructed local people in their installation and maintenance.¹⁴

Four additional students were awarded Andy Ingham memorial scholarships to undertake university education, and Hume City Council provided an additional 24 scholarships for secondary students to help them complete

¹³ Friends of Aileu Update, no. 2, December 2004.

¹⁴ Information on ATA projects from Mick Harris – ATA/Renew, 6 November 2020.

their secondary schooling. Over \$10,000 was raised from various activities, including the first of many annual trivia nights, a car quiz and coffee sales.

By the end of 2004 Rae Perry had been elected mayor of Darebin so was not able to continue as project officer. She and Richard Brown shared the role for some time before Richard was appointed to fill it. He would hold the position for more than ten years.

2005

Early in 2005, partnerships were formed with the Shire of Campaspe/Campaspe East Timor Association in Friendship and the Moora Moora Cooperative Community near Healesville, which had set up friendship arrangements with the Aileu subdistrict of Liquidoe and the village of Besilau respectively.



Interpreter Jose da Costa, District Administrator Mr Martinho Matos, Moreland Mayor Cr Mark Higginbotham and Hume Mayor Cr Gary Jungwirth, 2005

The arrangement with the Shire of Campaspe was a direct result of the trip to Aileu by Gary Jungwirth and Wayne Harvey in 2001. Wayne Harvey was now CEO of Campaspe Shire and brought his enthusiasm and knowledge of friendship arrangement to that rural area. The three friends groups and their various partners conducted a planning session early in 2005.

In May, the new district administrator of Aileu, Martinho Matos, visited Melbourne, and a civic reception was held at which the

new five-year friendship agreement was signed. He also invited representatives of Hume and Moreland to visit Aileu to observe the village chief and other Suco elections in Aileu District in June–July. This invitation was taken up with Gary Jungwirth and Moreland councillor, Joe Caputo, delegated to visit. They reported that the elections had been well conducted. They were very impressed by the enthusiasm shown by the local people for the democratic process, with 88 per cent of eligible voters participating, despite the fact that many of them had to walk long distances in order to vote. Gary Jungwirth observed that roads, transport and the quality of food were much improved since his earlier visits.¹⁵ The councillors also took the opportunity to check on the state of play with the various projects.

Sally Burchard had replaced Vicki Day as the AVI volunteer teacher. She taught English in the schools and also helped to train local teachers. She was appointed for eighteen months, but unfortunately ill health caused her to return to Australia early in 2006.

In September, Richard Brown made his first visit to Timor-Leste since his appointment as project officer. He met local officials, people working on the various projects and five of the Andy Ingham Scholarship holders. The Friends of Aileu had agreed to fund a further four scholarships in 2005–06. Campaspe East Timor Association in Friendship (CETAF) had also agreed to fund a scholarship.

The education system still had very limited resources. Richard reported that the government high school in Aileu was housed in partly refurbished buildings from the Indonesian era. It had seventeen teachers for the 500 students with only five of these paid by the Ministry of Education. Student fees paid the rest. Most of the teachers had no teacher training and the school had no budget to provide for this.¹⁶

The Alternative Technology Association (ATA) had continued its work on solar systems. Mick Harris and Chris Moss were in Dili at the time and expressed interest in further projects in Aileu. A much-needed



Project Officer Richard Brown with Aileu University Scholarship recipients



Ricahrd Brown at Sarala PS with banner from Brunswick North West PS

15 Joe Caputo and Gary Jungwirth, Report on a visit to observe the Village Chief and other Suco elections in Aileu District, Timor-Leste, 29 June – 6 July 2005.
16 Richard Brown, Report on a visit to Timor-Leste 20 September – 1 October 2005.

internet connection in Aileu was made possible by the solar power system installed by ATA.

A request for a computer learning centre had been made to Crs Jungwirth and Caputo while they were visiting. Richard Brown investigated this and began to organise funding for a facility including a library, language laboratory and IT training room to be housed in the existing public library building in Aileu. This would become the highly successful Aileu Resource and Training Centre (ARTC). The ARTC mounted the first Aileu Expo of local culture and produce and products. The Expo became an annual event, held around the 28 November anniversary of the 1975 Proclamation of Independence and continuing to grow in size and relevance to the Aileu community.

Moreland Community Health Service (MCHS) became interested in assisting in Aileu at about this time. Tracie Andrews and Dr Julie Quinliven visited in September 2005. At the time most health services in Aileu were provided by the Sisters of Maryknoll and MCHS worked closely with the sisters.

Closer relationships were developed with Melbourne's East Timorese community. Friends of Aileu participated in the activities of the Melbourne East Timorese Activity Centre (METAC). METAC had been established by a group of young Melbourne East Timorese, many from families now living in the southeastern suburbs. Among other activities, monthly welcome dinners are held in different locations. They involve East Timorese getting together with local communities to eat traditional food and learn about East Timorese culture. From 2005 the Friends of Aileu have arranged for one dinner each year to be held in a community centre in Hume.



Deputy District Administrator Mr Antonio Bello at Campaspe Shire Council

2006

Kirsty Sword Gusmão (by now the first lady of Timor-Leste) visited Melbourne to promote the work of the Alola Foundation, which she had established to assist women and children. Friends of Aileu organised two events at which she spoke to raise funds for the foundation. Deputy District Administrator Antonio Belo visited Moreland in May.

Soon after this, there was a period of civil unrest in Timor-Leste, a series of events culminating in a political, humanitarian and security crisis of major dimensions. This led the president of Timor-Leste, the president of the national parliament and the prime minister to request UN assistance. Ultimately, in August 2006, a new mission, the United Nations Integrated Mission in Timor-Leste (UNMIT),¹⁷ was established.

UNMIT was provided with a far-reaching mandate to assist the country in overcoming the consequences and underlying causes of the 2006 crisis. Following the deployment of UNMIT, the overall situation in Timor-Leste improved, although the security situation in the country remained volatile and the political climate fluid.

In Aileu, Antonio Belo, who was from the east of the country, had been forced into hiding during the period of unrest, and was replaced as acting district administrator by Mario Soares. Many refugees from Dili had come to Aileu to escape violence, and this had put an additional strain on resources. The new Aileu Resources and Training

Centre had been set up and was used as a food distribution centre during the crisis. ATA had to suspend its operations for a period but still managed to install a number of solar lighting and power systems in Aileu District. Some of the scholarship holders had had their studies disrupted, but both the Andy Ingham and Hume Council scholarship programs continued.

By September, when Gary Jungwirth made another visit to Aileu as part of a VLGA delegation, he reported that the district was calm. Moreland Community Health Service (MCHS) donated a vehicle to the government health clinic, as well as various medical supplies. Friends of Aileu continued its work, raising funds and supporting the various partnerships.

2007

Richard Brown visited Timor-Leste in September 2007 to review the various projects. The unrest the previous year had disrupted the scholarship program. Of the eleven students awarded scholarships in 2006–07, all had had to suspend their studies and only five were planning to resume. Richard met four of the earlier scholarship holders; all were progressing well and were reaching the end of their courses. It was agreed that nine more students would be awarded scholarships commencing in 2007–08. Hume City Council was continuing to support secondary students with five students awarded three-year scholarships each year. The cost was only US\$200 per student, showing how a small amount of money can make a big difference.

Richard also visited the Aileu Resources and Training Centre, which had been set up in a refurbished Portuguese library. It now had two computer laboratories, a meeting room and other facilities. The ARTC organised the first Aileu Science, Reading and Mathematics Contest with local education authorities and schools. This too became an important annual event, involving all 70-plus schools in Aileu, as well as some schools from other municipalities. Moreland Community Health Service had sent a delegation consisting of the CEO, Philip Moran and Board President



Philip Moran, CEO MCHS, with Maryknoll Sisters



Katerina Angelopoulos (MCHS), Mr Januario and Philip Moran with donated vehicle



Lampu diak solar lighting committee, Besilau

Katerina Angelopoulos to Timor-Leste at the same time, and an agreement was signed between them, Friends of Aileu and the Alola Foundation. MCHS agreed to fund the Aileu Maternal and Child Health Service for three years. High rates of maternal and child mortality were a particular concern for the health service.

ATA continued its innovative projects in Aileu District. A wind generator was installed in Liquidoe, sponsored by the Shire of Campaspe, and a solar installation in Besilau was sponsored by the Moora community. The ATA project by now had acquired a life of its own, although it still had links to the Friends of Aileu. ATA raised

¹⁷ <https://peacekeeping.un.org/mission/past/unmit/background.shtml>.

funds and obtained donations of equipment from Australia and doubled the number of small solar installations each year. As well as installing the systems, they trained local people as technicians to maintain them.

Helder S. Freitas visited Moreland to study strategic and urban planning and information technology systems as part of the Victorian government's Timor-Leste Training Partnership. He spent a week with various council officers and also visited ATA and CERES (Centre for Education and Research in Environmental Strategies).

A parliamentary election was held in 2007 and was significant as the first following the disruption in 2006. Rae Perry, by this time the CEO of the Victorian Local Governance Association (VLGA), and Damien Kingsbury organised a group of more than 50 observers from Melbourne. This included representatives from the VLGA and friendship groups across Australia. The VLGA contingent included Moreland councillors Joe Caputo and Mark Higginbotham and Hume councillor Gary Jungwirth. Glenyys Romanes also attended representing the Friends of Aileu Community Committee. The elections in Aileu were conducted peacefully across the district and with a high voter turnout. The delegation also helped scrutinise the counting of the votes in the district hall at the end of the day.

In November, Chris Adams arrived as the new AVI volunteer based in Aileu. Although his official job was adviser to the district administrator, he spent most of his time managing the various projects sponsored by the Friends of Aileu. The re-establishment of the Friendship Commission, disrupted by the unrest in 2006, was a priority.

2008

The Aileu Friendship Commission was reconstituted with new interim terms of reference and a new membership, taking an active role in providing advice on the community priorities, friendship activities

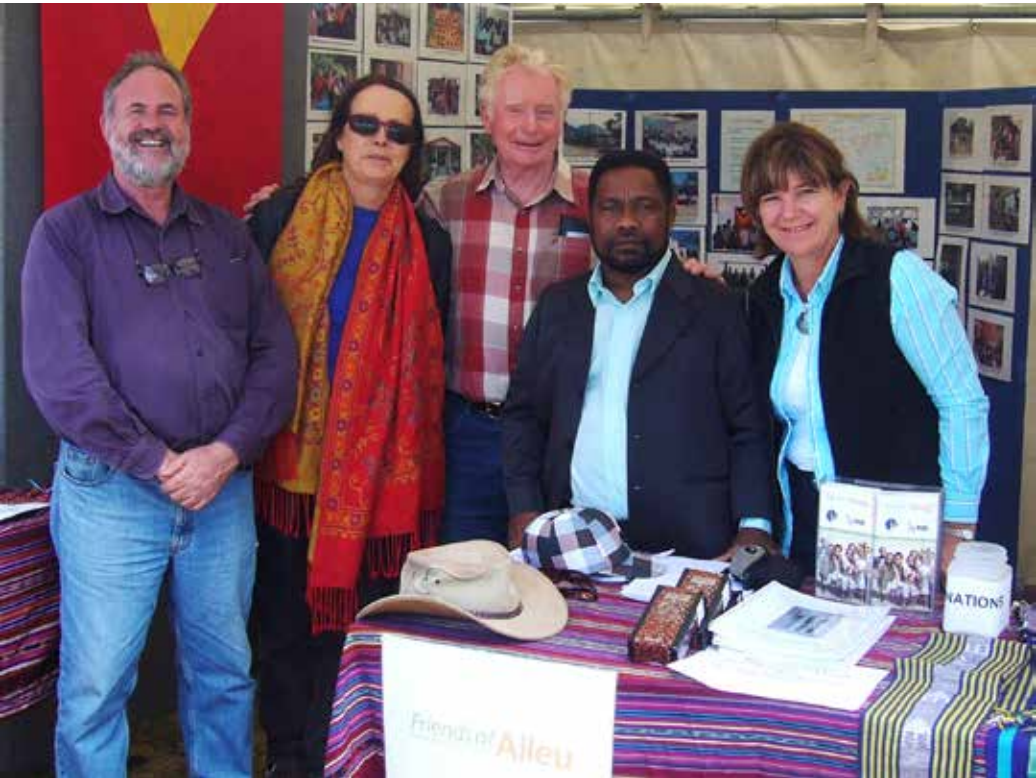
and especially the secondary and university scholarship programs.

In June 2008, the Timor-Leste – Australian Friendship Conference was held in Dili for the groups supporting by now more than 50 friendship arrangements between organisations in the two countries. It was organised by the VLGA and the Timor-Leste Ministry of State Administration. Two hundred delegates (about 100 each from Australia and Timor-Leste) attended, including fifteen from Friends of Aileu and its various Australian partners as well as representatives from Aileu. They discussed the benefits of the arrangements and the way forward. The Friends of Aileu contingent visited Aileu District and inspected the various projects they had sponsored.

Kate Jeffery, coordinator East Timor Projects at the Moreland Community Health Service, was part of the Friends of Aileu contingent. In her report, she wrote of the difficulties still facing the new nation:

I was struck by the immense physical challenges posed by the sheer logistics of travelling and moving anything around Timor due to the state of the roads. Money is being invested in road construction, but progress is painstakingly slow. Also evident are the problems of entrenched poverty, the remoteness of many villages, the variability in the quality of agricultural land and output and the dependence upon imports of food and oil. Aileu District suffers more than many other parts of the island from dry season water shortages and poorer soils with adverse impacts on agricultural output and food security and underlying health problems arising from poor nutrition.¹⁸

Philip Moran, CEO of the MCHS, had also visited Dili earlier in the year. He reported on the extensive support provided by the MCHS to various health projects. This included support for the Uma Ita Nian Clinic, with its community health programs and provision of primary health care and supply of medical and other equipment, including an ambulance. East Timor still suffered from



Richard Brown, Julie Houniet, John Rutherford, Mario Soares and Anne Jungwirth at Coburg Carols



Mrs Maria Diamantina, Director ARTC, with Gary and Anne Jungwirth

18 Kate, Jeffery, Report on a visit to Timor-Leste June 2008 to Moreland Community Health Service.

very a high maternal and child death rate and the MCHS was committed to reducing the causes of this.

While in Dili, Philip Moran also took steps to set up a partnership with the Living Memory Project. This was a project initiated by Jill Jolliffe, Australian author and journalist, to record the memories of former political prisoners and also attend to their ongoing health needs.

Friends of Aileu had a particularly successful fund-raising year, with the money used to support the scholarships. The annual trivia night was hosted by popular TV personalities, Julia Zemiro and Brian Nankervis, and raised \$21,000. A walkathon sponsored by Kangan Batman TAFE raised an additional \$3000.

In 2008 it was also agreed to expand the scholarship program to include 25 recipients studying at university plus an additional ten studying agriculture at secondary and tertiary levels. With the fifteen secondary school scholarships sponsored by Hume City Council, a total of 50 students would be supported.

Maria Diamantina Martins, director of the Aileu Resource and Training Centre (ARTC), visited Moreland and Hume in May, where she met many friendship partners and community members and was able to share stories of some of the early success of the ARTC, including its library, computer classes, the Aileu Expo and the income-generation groups, its work with the Manu Casa community, and the training of literacy facilitators and delivery of adult literacy classes in Namoleso. Maria Diamantina has been heavily involved in women's organisations in Aileu and is one of the many women who have taken on leadership roles in the community.

Mario Soares, Aileu economic and social development officer, also visited Melbourne to observe the local government elections ahead of the Aileu municipal elections, due to take place in 2010.

2009

Friends of Aileu celebrated its ninth anniversary in May 2009 at a function at Brunswick Town Hall. This was attended by the Aileu assistant district administrator, Abel de Conceição, who was in Australia to study local government administration and services.



Project Officer Chris Adams, Deputy District Administrator Mr Abel da Conceicao and Deolinda and Joe da Cunha

In July, Richard Brown and Cr Alice Pryor from Moreland travelled to Timor-Leste. With Kate Jeffery and Chris Adams, they visited the various projects. They also attended a community planning workshop auspiced by the Aileu Friendship Commission. This event included over 100 participants from government and the community. It reviewed the vision statement for the friendship relationship, developed a strategic plan, and set objectives for the next five years. These were identified as:

- 1. Develop quality human resources (including women's development)
- 2. Develop quality health services
- 3. Improve local production and access to markets
- 4. Improve infrastructure, including water, electricity and communication

ATA continued its work with small solar systems. The focus had changed from public buildings to village projects, especially providing power for lighting and cooking in individual houses. ATA representatives worked with local committees to organise this, and householders were charged a small amount of money for installation and maintenance of the solar systems. The systems made a big difference to the lives



Friends of Aileu Chair Cr Alice Pryor and Richard Brown at Aileu Community Planning Workshop



Facilitator Abilio de Araujo addressing Aileu Community Planning Workshop



Patricia Vickers Rich, community members and kindergarten students at Lost World Exhibition opening

of villagers as they no longer had to use expensive and dangerous kerosene lamps and stoves or suffer from inhaling wood smoke.

This year also saw the opening of the O Mundo Perdido (The Lost World) exhibition of Timor-Leste geology and ancient flora and fauna in Aileu. This educational exhibition was created by Professor Patricia Vickers Rich, of the Prime Sci! science education project at Swinburne University (formerly at the time working from the Monash University Science Centre). Patricia and colleagues have since made many visits to Aileu, initially to relocate the exhibition from the municipal offices to the ARTC, and subsequently to upgrade its displays and provide additional interpretative materials.

Chris Adams completed his two-year placement as AVI volunteer at the end of 2009. He wrote of his experiences:

As a constant presence throughout the two years in Aileu, I think I came to be perceived as not just a friend, colleague and a facilitator for aspects of the friendship relationship, but in some way also as the face of Cidade Amiga (Friendship City). The multiple friendship

visits that were able to be conducted during [the] period of my assignment helped show that there was a wide range of contributors to the friendship relationship but also carried with it the potential for some people in Aileu to develop very high expectations about the potential for resource contributions from Cidade Amiga and partners.¹⁹

Philip Moran and Katarina Angelopoulos, (Moreland Community Health) and a number of members of the Campaspe East Timor Association in Friendship, also visited for the opening of the renovated nurses' quarters that they had largely funded at the Aileu Hospital.



CETAF members, MCHS representatives and Health Director Mr Antonio at opening of nurses accommodation



Sister Dorothy McGowan, Dr Martin Hall (NRCH), Health Centre Manager Mr Rogerio and dental nurse Manual

Oral Health Program

In line with the greater emphasis on health issues, the Friends of Aileu in December 2009 endorsed an oral health program. This had been in gestation for a number of years and was initiated by Dr Martin Hall of North Richmond Community Health. Many of his clients and colleagues at North Richmond were from Timor-Leste. They had lived in the Richmond public housing when they first arrived in Australia and continued to use the health centre after they had moved from the area. Ten East Timorese people worked at the centre, including several in the dental health program.

In 2000, Martin visited Timor-Leste with Sally Vong, an East Timorese dental nurse working at North Richmond. This was at the request of AusAID, which wanted a review of the state of dental services in the new nation.

This visit led to a long-term involvement and the setting up of innovative educational and preventative dental programs. In 2007 the Aileu Vila Dental Clinic wrote to Martin Hall requesting assistance, and a specific Aileu program was established as a result. It concentrated on working with schools to encourage children to brush their teeth and carrying out preventative dental procedures. Colgate generously sponsored the program, providing toothpaste and brushes for the next ten years. The pilot project started in Aileu was recognised by the Timor-Leste Ministry of Health and Education and used as the model for similar programs in other districts.

¹⁹ Adams, Chris *A Journey of Friendship*.

2010

This year saw the tenth anniversary of the friendship relationship and the signing of a new five-year friendship agreement. Martino Matos, Aileu district administrator, visited Melbourne to sign the agreement and meet the various partners.

Following the conclusion of his AVI assignment, Chris Adams worked part time for a number of months assisting Project Officer Richard Brown. In Aileu, he was replaced by Paul Coghlan in a similar role of district support officer through AVI.

The Oral Health Project was commenced. Martin Hall visited Aileu in July with Sally Vong and started work with one of the schools. As well, they provided advice on the manufacture of portable dental chairs in Timor-Leste, and the first of these was made at the St Francis of Assisi Disability Workshop and installed at the District Health Centre at Aileu.

Richard Brown and Gary Jungwirth attended the Australia Timor-Leste Friendship Network/Ministry of State Administration workshop on friendship relationships held in Maubisse in August. The workshop attracted over 100 participants, including Aileu District officials. They discussed the future of friendship relationships and possible new partnerships.

A new partner for Friends of Aileu was the Kangaroo Valley (NSW) Remexio partnership, which agreed to fund secondary and tertiary scholarships for students from Remexio subdistrict and also to contribute to the funding of the AVI Aileu position. In later years, Kangaroo Valley was the major funder of the ATA solar systems project in Remexio.

Moreland and Hume City Councils signed three-year MOUs with the Shire of Campaspe, Moora Cooperative Community, Merri (formerly Moreland) Community Health Services and the Alternative Technology Association.

ATA received a grant from the United Nations to design a training curriculum to enable solar power systems for the whole of East Timor. Training manuals were translated into Tetum.



Mr Martinho Matos renewing Friendship Agreement with Moreland and Hume Council representatives



Mr Martinho at Kangan TAFE with Paul O'Sullivan



Aileu District and Friends of Aileu delegation members, Maubisse conference



School Principal greeting Sally Vong and other members of Oral Health Education Project team

2011

The Annual Report of Friends of Aileu highlighted another year of impressive achievements. \$43,000 had been raised, all of which was used to support the various projects.²⁰ The funds were raised largely as a result of the hard work of the community members on the committee, who organised dinners and the trivia night and sold coffee and other items at community stalls. Brunswick North West Primary School continued its relationship with Sarlala Primary School and the students raised money and corresponded with children at Sarlala.

Jill Joliffe of the Living Memory Project spoke at the 11th anniversary dinner and praised the friendship arrangements as

perhaps making one of the most meaningful contributions to post-independent Timor of any of the aid groups working there ... Representing a fresh, no strings attached, human approach to supporting the East Timorese, unaffected by bureaucracy and the limitations of those of us dependent on working in the conventional NCO mould.²¹

Martin Hall, accompanied by colleagues Emily Chalmers-Robinson and Sally Vong, visited Timor-Leste and spent time in Aileu talking to various health authorities and visiting outreach clinics and schools.²² The Oral Health Project had been successful in attracting a large volume of donations in cash and kind.

Merri Community Health Services (Merri Health) agreed to provide 50 per cent of the cost of a birthing centre to be established in a refurbished building in Laulara subdistrict. Friends of Aileu assisted with raising the remaining funds, which included donations from the Campaspe East Timor Association in Friendship and Wild Timor Coffee.



Using portable dental chair made at St Francis Assisi workshop, Aileu

²⁰ Richard Brown, *Friends of Aileu Annual Report 2011: Achievements and Prospects*, Moreland and Hume City Councils, 2011.

²¹ Quoted in 'Friends of Aileu Update', no. 26, May 2011.

²² Martin Hall and Richard Brown, *Aileu Oral Health Project: Report on a Visit to Aileu April-May 2011*

2012

Richard Brown and Anne and Gary Jungwirth formed part of a contingent of international observers at the first round of the presidential elections in March 2012. Fifty-four people from the Australia Timor-Leste Friendship Network (ATLFN) attended—showing the strength of the friendship network nationwide. Richard also visited the many projects now being supported by the Friends of Aileu and its partners.

The Laulara Birthing Centre, supported by Merri Health, was completed and opened ahead of schedule, providing a much-needed service to local women and their babies. Previously, most women gave birth at home, often without receiving any professional advice or assistance. If complications arose the women would have to cope alone or



Derelict building that became the Laulara Birthing Centre



Domingos Vidigal visiting Moreland Waste Services facility

undertake a long and uncomfortable journey to the district hospital. Giving birth in Timor-Leste was a difficult and dangerous process, often with disastrous outcomes.

Paul Coghlan had finished his contract as AVI volunteer in Aileu late in 2011 and, in May 2012, was replaced by Don and Rosemary Higgins. Don worked on friendship projects, while Rosemary was involved in a project with municipal authorities to improve waste management in the town. Paul Coghlan returned to Aileu to work as a volunteer at the Uma Ita Nian Clinic.

Aileu Planning Officer Domingos Vidigal visited Melbourne to observe the local government elections in October; he also looked at programs and operations at Hume and Moreland councils and spoke to the various partner organisations.



Carlo Carli (Merri Health) visiting completed Laulara Birthing Centre



Domingos Vidigal lunching with Moora Moora Cooperative Community

Developing Local Capacity and Leadership

2013

The Cr Andy Ingham Aileu Scholarship program continued to support local students. In 2013, 28 students had their scholarships renewed and eight new scholarships were awarded. The total value of the scholarships that year was \$12,120. In addition, Hume City Council, with assistance from Friends of Aileu and its partners, continued to fund scholarships for secondary students. Thirty-six secondary students were supported in 2013.

Moreland and Hume councils agreed to establish a memorandum of understanding with the Brunswick-based Centre for Education and Research in Environmental Strategies (CERES) with a view to tours of Timor-Leste being added to the range of community engagement tours operated by CERES Global.

At this time, organisations in Timor-Leste that had been supported by international aid bodies began to move towards local management. Examples of this process were the Uma Ita Nian Parish Health Clinic, which had been operated by the Sisters of Maryknoll since 1994, and the St Francis of Assisi Disability Workshop, which the clinic had supported. Friends of Aileu supported training for ARTC staff to prepare them to take over the management of the centre from the Maryknoll Sisters.

Towards the end of the year, Friends of Aileu signed new two-year Memoranda of Understanding with the Shire of Campaspe, Merri Community Health Services and the Alternative Technology Association, all long-term partners, as well as the new agreement with CERES.

A dinner for local East Timorese families was held in conjunction with the Melbourne East Timorese Activity Centre.

Carlo Carli from Merri Community Health Service reported to the MCHS Board in August 2013 on the various Aileu projects. Infant mortality in Timor-Leste had declined from 83 deaths per 1000 live births from 1996 to 2000 to 45 deaths per 1000 live births between 2005 and 2010, and this improvement was reflected in Aileu. One interesting aspect of health care in Timor-Leste was the assistance given by Cuba. At this time, there were 305 Cuban doctors and nurses in Timor-Leste, paid for by the Cuban government, and about 850 East Timorese medical personnel being trained in Cuban universities.²³

The Oral Health Project continued with Martin Hall and Sally Vong again visiting Aileu and expanding the program to more schools. Colgate Australia continued to donate materials for this program.

The schools program undertook a school art project, involving three Aileu schools and three Australian schools, with children exchanging their paintings.

Community members of Friends of Aileu continued to work on fundraising by selling goods at community events and organising dinners and the trivia night. Several substantial individual donations were also received.

As well as continuing the arrangement with Coffex to package and sell coffee from Aileu, the friends also agreed to sell organic coffee imported by Wild Timor Coffee Co. This enterprise had been set up by four young Australian soldiers who had been in Timor-Leste as part of the INTERFET contingent

23 Carlo Carli, *Aileu and Our Friendship*, Report to Merri Community Health Centre Board, August 2013.

and spent time in Aileu on subsequent ADF military assistance missions. They befriended local coffee farmers in Belumhatu, Aileu, and later began importing green beans to Australia. They established a wholesale coffee business and have a café in Coburg. Some of the profits are directed to support of the Laulara Birthing Centre.

Don and Rosemary Higgins returned early to Australia following a security breach at their house in Aileu.

2014

In April, the chair and deputy chair of the Friends of Aileu Community Committee (Councillors Helen Patsikatheodorou and Lambros Tapinos) travelled to Aileu with Richard Brown. They visited the various projects and presented the Laulara Birthing Centre with a box of medical equipment donated by Merri Community Health. Merri Community Health also donated \$5000 towards the cost of new building works at the centre.

In Melbourne, the conference, *Working Together for Timor-Leste: The Next 10 Years*, was held at the Darebin Arts and Entertainment Centre. It was largely organised by the VLGA Timor-Leste Working Group, headed by Richard Brown, and drew a large number of friendship groups and other East Timor support groups from around Australia; it included an 'expo' at which the various groups' activities were showcased. It was attended by 270 delegates including Aileu District Development Officer Mario Soares and Aileu Vila Subdistrict Community Development Officer Camilo da Costa. The main focus of the conference was to discuss the transfer of responsibilities for delivering programs to the local organisations and the transition to elected local government.

Hume and Moreland councils agreed to sign a municipal cooperation agreement with the Timor-Leste Ministry of State Administration to assist Aileu District in the transition to elected local government. This recognised the long-standing relationship between Hume and Moreland and Aileu and was one of a number of agreements between

Victorian and Timor-Leste local authorities facilitated by the Victorian government.

Richard Brown resigned at the end of the year after more than ten years as the project officer—an exemplary period of service that had achieved much. He was replaced as project officer by Chris Adams, who had recently returned from Timor-Leste after completing another AVI assignment with FONGTIL, the Timor-Leste NGO network and umbrella organisation.

Richard finished on a highlight with an exhibition at Hume City Council of students' drawings from an art and correspondence exchange project involving three Aileu and three Moreland and Hume primary schools.



Crs Lambros Tapinos and Helen Patsikatheodorou, with Jose and Sister Dorothy, St Francis Assisi workshop



Mario Soares and delegates at Working Together conference, Darebin



Camilo da Costa, Mario Soares, teacher and Richard Brown with BNWPS students



Students, teachers and parents with Richard Brown at My Home My School exhibition, Hume Global Learning Centre

2015

Friends of Aileu agreed to assist the Uma Ita Nian Clinic with its food production program after the major sponsor of this program was no longer able to provide funding. The program was led by an agricultural scientist, Rui Sarmento, and worked with farmers' groups to develop more efficient and sustainable agricultural practices. CERES Global was also involved with this project, with a group visiting to look at establishing permaculture practices in Aileu.

The scholarship scheme was bearing fruit. It had produced 25 graduates, of whom seven were now working in Aileu in various government roles.

Quida Xavier Pereira and Natalia Ximenes from the Aileu Resource and Training Centre (ARTC) had completed courses in administration and accounting at Muhammadiyah University in Malang, Indonesia, supported by the Friends of Aileu and were using these skills in the running of the centre. On completion of her studies Quida return to take on the role of coordinator of the ARTC. After a couple of years Quida resigned to fill a position with the Uma Ita Nian Parish Clinic, and Natalia assumed the role of coordinator.

The relationship with Melbourne's East Timorese community continued. The Melbourne East Timorese Activity Centre (METAC) was celebrating 40 years in Australia, and various celebrations were

held to mark this milestone. Friends of Aileu hosted an exhibition of photographs, *Hateke Ba Kotuk- Looking Back*, at a number of locations in Hume and Moreland.

Local Government Victoria had set up the Local Government Timor-Leste Partnership Network to bring together all the Victorian councils engaged in Timor-Leste partnerships. The emphasis at this stage was assisting with the decentralisation process and setting up of elected local governments in Timor-Leste. Hume and Moreland councils had both signed agreements with the Timor-Leste government to assist with the transition to elected local government.

The North Richmond Community Health team visited Aileu twice to continue oral health work with the schools in the area. Friends of Aileu was providing some funds to the program, as some of the original sources had dried up. Fortunately, the program obtained grants from the Borrow Foundation in the UK and the Costa Foundation, and Melbourne University also became involved.

The ATA received a substantial grant from Google to pay for solar installations all over Timor-Leste. The project, which originally started with seeding funding from Friends of Aileu, had come to benefit the whole country. The Aileu ATA projects were now largely funded by the Kangaroo Valley/Remexio partnership.



Paul Stewart and Fablice with young East Timorese community members, at METAC Hateke ba Kotuk exhibition

2016

In early 2016 new appointments were made to the positions of municipal administrator (João Tilman do Rego) and municipal secretary (Victoria Mesquita do Rego). The former district administrator, Martinho Matos, retired and the former deputy district administrator, Abel da Conceição, took on a new role in the public sector.

Both councils confirmed their commitment to the friendship project with a new friendship agreement signed in August 2016. In addition, Hume and Moreland councils signed municipal cooperation agreements with respect to Aileu. These agreements are complementary to the friendship agreement

but are between governments rather than communities and are designed to strengthen public sector skills and improve governance in Timor-Leste.

The Friends of Aileu Community Committee continued to meet regularly to hear reports from the various projects and plan future activities. The strategy plan was revised, with a greater emphasis on the sharing of cultures. Although it still worked to raise money for particular projects, the committee now had a closer relationship with the East Timorese community in Melbourne and was working towards making Timor-Leste more self-sufficient.



Joaquin and Sister Rosalva Sandi (ARTC) with CERES global participants at Kadalak Dame garden

In August, Richard Brown, Gary Jungwirth and Paul O'Sullivan represented the friends at the Decentralisation and Local Government Conference held in Dili. They also visited Aileu. Chris Adams had visited in June and met the new municipal administrator, João Tilman do Rego, and the municipal secretary, Victoria de Rego. A delegation from Merri Health and one from CERES Global Permaculture also visited Aileu during the year.

The CERES group worked with the ARTC to develop a concept plan for the Kadalak Dame Peace Garden. This was the start of an ongoing collaboration between ARTC, CERES and Friends of Aileu. In 2018 and 2019, visiting CERES Global groups, worked on the ground with the ARTC and local farmer partners to begin the development of the garden. It has since become a focus for experimenting with different agriculture techniques and crop diversity, as well as managing its nearby coffee plantation, and is making a contribution to local food security.

A group of IT for Social Impact students from Swinburne University spent time working with the ARTC on business and IT planning.

The Oral Health project was expanded from the original two schools to six nominated

by Mario Soares. Ana Tilman, a dental nurse from Laulara, was engaged to assist with the program. She proved to be a great asset with her impressive communication and presentation skills used to publicise and promote the program.

In November Mario Soares, chief of planning Aileu Municipal Administration, died suddenly and was mourned by the Friends of Aileu. He had been the main contact person in Aileu since the beginning of the project. He was a great supporter and a major contributor to the success of the friendship arrangement.

In December, Maryknoll Sister Susan Gubbins returned to the United States after 25 years' service in Aileu working in education and health together with sister Dorothy McGubbin and others. Dorothy had returned the previous year. Before leaving, however, they had made great progress in equipping Timorese staff, including Felicidade Martins and Doroteia Nascimento, to capably manage the Uma Ita Nian Clinic.

An Expanding Program

2017

The *Friends of Aileu Annual Report 2017* shows how the program had expanded. Chris Adams visited Timor-Leste for two weeks in June/July and spent the time meeting with the various partner organisations and inspecting projects. Projects visited included the Laulara Health Centre (joint project with Merri Health), Uma Ita Nian Parish Clinic, and ARTC to discuss ongoing involvement of CERES Global and Swinburne University, solar lighting projects auspiced by ATA, and various other projects that had had input from Australian organisations. Friends of Aileu had taken on a facilitation role in setting up new projects.

A number of other visits to Aileu took place during the year. Most were funded by the participants. Gary and Anne Jungwirth took a group of friends to observe the presidential elections in March. Andrea Spinosa was an

international observer for the parliamentary elections in March.

Carlo Carli, from Merri Health, and some of his family visited in June/July to see the initiatives the organisation had funded. Following this, Aoife Carli-Hannan initiated the first of what would become the 'Grassroots Gatherings' annual events to engage young people and raise funds for projects in Aileu.

A contingent from Campaspe East Timor Association in Friendship visited in August. In December, with funding support from Friends of Aileu, a group of Aileu university graduates and mostly young community leaders held the inaugural meeting of the Aileu Anan Association (AILA) as a forum to discuss issues of importance to the Aileu community and to provide input into local government decisions. AILA



Dental nurse Ana Tilman on Oral Health Project school visit



Aileu decentralisation workshop, Friends of Aileu delegation and municipal staff



Chico dos Santos and guests at first CERES Gathering for Aileu, 2017



Inauguration of Aileu Anan Association

was subsequently engaged to interview past beneficiaries of the Aileu University Scholarship Program and in 2019 provided a detailed report to the municipal administrator, including observations on the success of the scholarship program and recommendations on ways to improve the program and its management.

Friends of Aileu's collaboration with AILA complements relationships developed with other organisations of young people, such as the Arte Mambai Rai Husar, Aileu Municipal Youth Centre, Aileu University Students Association and Aileu Rotaract, all of which include strong participation and leadership contributions from young women as well as men.

Back in Melbourne, the Friends of Aileu Community Committee continued to raise funds through the trivia night, annual dinners with East Timorese food and entertainment, Giving Circle dinners hosted by Glenyys and Graham Romanes, and holding stalls at community festivals and events. Special mention should be made of Teresa Garcia, who was a foundation member of the Friends of Aileu and has continued to volunteer at fundraising events since 2000, including providing the trivia quiz questions for many years. Others who helped make the annual trivia night a great success included Gordon Blake and friends and family, who organised musical entertainment and managed the scoring of the trivia quiz for many years.

24 Chris Adams, *Friends of Aileu Annual Report 2018*, Moreland and Hume City Councils, 2018, p. 22.

Contact with Melbourne's East Timorese community continued to increase. Friends of Aileu and METAC hosted events together. Friends of Aileu also worked with the Timorese Association of Victoria and maintained contact with students from Aileu in Melbourne.

2018

Activities continued as in previous years. Chris Adams wrote in his annual report:

This friendship and cooperation is assisting the community of Aileu to develop and utilise their own resources for a more sustainable future in line with the Friendship and Municipal Cooperation Agreements. We have good reason to believe that the real gains in community capacity observed in the areas of education and training, community health and progress towards an improved environment and more sustainable livelihoods have, at least in some small part, been positively influenced by the community, organisational and local government connections and solidarity facilitated through the ongoing friendship and cooperation relationships.²⁴

A group from CERES Global spent two weeks in Aileu in June/July, working with ARTC and Na Terra on permaculture projects. This included the Kadalak Dame garden at the ARTC. The project officer spent three weeks in Aileu assisting with the CERES project and discussing the other projects with local partners.

Some members of Friends of Aileu joined the delegation from VLGA and the Australian Timor-Leste Friendship Network to observe the national elections in March.



Municipal Secretary Mrs Victoria Mesquita do Rego, with Ben Walta, Caitlin Tacey and Tyson O'Shea at CERES

2019

Friends of Aileu continued to work with its partners to deliver projects in Aileu. Fundraising activities in Melbourne included the annual dinner and forum, the trivia night, a film night and the third annual Grassroots Gathering at CERES, as well as participation in community events in Hume and Moreland. Collaboration continued with organisations for East Timorese people in Melbourne—the Melbourne East Timorese Activity Centre, the East Timorese Students' Association and the Australia East Timor Association.

In June, the Aileu municipal secretary, Victoria Mesquita de Rego, spent two weeks in Melbourne, meeting with staff of Hume and Moreland councils and also visited partner organisations. A particular focus of her visit was to learn more about waste management. This is the most recent of many study tour visits and professional

development activities provided to Aileu local government officers over the years.

A delegation visited Aileu for a week in June/July. The group included Councillors Karen Sherry and Joseph Haweil from Hume and Deputy Mayor Mark Riley from Moreland as well as Project Officer Chris Adams. The project officer spent a further week following up with partner organisations. CERES Global ran a two-week visit to Aileu to work on permaculture and sustainable agriculture projects.

Merri Health continued to support a number of projects, including Uma Ita Nian Clinic and the St Francis of Assisi Disability Workshop.

The Oral Health Project, now supported by La Trobe University, Dental Health Services Victoria and Deakin University, as well as the original partner, North Richmond Community

Health, continued to work with the six pilot schools in remote areas of Aileu.

Friends of Aileu were very sad to learn of the death of Gary Jungwirth in July. Gary had been involved with Friends of Aileu since its inception and was largely responsible for Hume's involvement. He was also active in the VLGA in promoting friendship agreements more broadly. Gary made numerous trips to Aileu and made many friends there. He is greatly missed in Melbourne and in Aileu.



Friends of Aileu Council delegation (Chris Adams and Crs Mark Riley, Karen Sherry and Joseph Haweil) at Aileu Municipal Youth Centre



CERES Global participants working with Aileu Catequists at Kadalak Dame garden

2020

2020 marks twenty years since the signing of the first Memorandum of Understanding that set up the friendship arrangement. Hume and Moreland have agreed to continue with the relationship and a new agreement was drawn up and signed.

**Renewed Friendship Agreement 2020 between:
The Municipality of Aileu, Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste, and
Hume City Council and Moreland City Council, Victoria, Australia**

On 4 May 2000, in recognition of the aspirations of the people of East Timor and Aileu to take control of their future, Hume City Council and Moreland City Council committed to a friendship relationship with the District of Aileu.

This commitment was made on the day that Mr Xanana Gusmão delivered the 13th Blackburn Oration on The Importance of Community Alliances in the Re-building of East Timor.

The Friends of Aileu Community Committee, which was established in 2000, continues to operate as a means for the Hume and Moreland City Councils, partner organisations and members of the community to collaborate in respect of the friendship relationship.

The friendship relationship has been periodically renewed, most recently in 2016 with the signing of a Friendship Agreement between the Aileu Municipal Administration, Hume City Council and Moreland City Council.

In recognition of the continuing value of this relationship to our communities:

- We the undersigned reaffirm our organisations' commitment to the friendship relationship and the principles and values on which it is based, including sustainability, mutual respect, mutual understanding and Timorese-led decision making
- We also reaffirm our organisations' commitment to support the development of local government in Aileu, as outlined in the Municipal Cooperation Agreements (2016) between the Timor-Leste Ministry of State Administration and the Hume and Moreland City Councils.

Accordingly, we agree that we will continue to work together in friendship to:

- Respond to the aspirations of the people of Aileu as they build their democratic local government and work towards an inclusive, prosperous and sustainable future
- Engage with the people of Aileu in ways that complement their efforts to achieve the goals they have for their communities
- Ensure that any activities that we undertake respect:
 - The policies and programs of the Government of the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste and priorities identified in consultation with the Aileu Municipal Administration and Aileu community organisations
 - The capacity of our organisations, partners and communities to resource and sustain them

- Foster engagements with and between young people as they take on their responsibilities for the future
- Share our stories, cultures, perspectives, skills and resources, and improve mutual understanding
- Help develop and maintain strong communities in Aileu and in Hume and Moreland.

We acknowledge the independence, wisdom, knowledge and skills of the people of Aileu and their representative and community organisations.

We also acknowledge the complementary roles and contributions of the Friends of Aileu and their Australian partner organisations, and of other community groups and organisations engaging with Aileu in the spirit of friendship.

This agreement is intended to be a guide for our organisations, and for the communities we represent for the coming five years. This agreement will not have any legal effect and may be terminated or varied as agreed.

Councillor Lambros Tapinos
Mayor
Moreland City Council
3 September 2020

Councillor Joseph Haweil
Chair Friends of Aileu
Community Committee
21 September 2020

Councillor Carly Moore
Mayor
Hume City Council
21 September 2020

Mr Miguel Pereira de Carvalho
Minister for State Administration
Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste

Mr João Tilman do Rago
Administrator
Municipality of Aileu

Friendship Agreement
2020



Community members install water conservation measures, Selo Craik village

The global pandemic has meant the planned public celebrations of this anniversary have had to be postponed. Visits to and from Timor-Leste have not been possible this year, however, support was able to be provided work to continue work on projects PERMATIL water conservation training, ARTC Kadalak Dame and Manu Casa projects, with Arte Mambai Rai Husar and for the Aileu Expo.

Friends of Aileu adopted a new strategy plan to guide its work over the next three to five years. This emphasises a two-way relationship, with the communities of Hume and Moreland and the District of Aileu all benefitting. The new vision statement reads as follows:

Our vision of an enduring friendship between the people of the municipalities of Aileu, Hume and Moreland, based on the principles of mutual respect, cooperation and local decision making as expressed in our Friendship Agreement.

To realise this Vision, we will share stories, culture, insights, information, expertise resources with our friends and partners in Aileu and Timor-Leste, working with our two Councils, local community organisations and other partners to contribute to a more sustainable and healthy future for Aileu.

A number of specific goals to further the vision were agreed to.

Following lobbying from the project officer, Abilio de Araujo (president of Aileu Anan Association) and Jose Valente (manager of Aileu Municipal Youth Centre), the municipal administrator re-convened the Friendship Commission in August 2020. It had operated intermittently since 2010 with liaison between the government and community of Aileu and the project officer conducted in an informal manner. The re-constituted commission gives a greater role to non-government representatives. Key tasks for the commission are to establish its terms of reference and decide on the structure and management arrangements for the Aileu University Scholarship Program, which it aims to re-introduce from 2021.

ATA (now called Renew) is reviewing its program, given that so much of the country has been covered by solar power plants and the technology is more readily

available locally. Over the sixteen years of its involvement, ATA has installed power to 2000 homes and 100 community centres.

Martinho Matos, former district administrator, died in November. Mr Martinho will be fondly remembered as a friend, generous host and champion of the friendship relationship.

Friends of Aileu has moved from its original focus on providing emergency material aid to Aileu to initiation and sponsorship of an extraordinary number of projects operated with a wide range of partner organisations. These continue to play a key role in Aileu's progress towards prosperity and self-sufficiency. The friends group has also engaged a large number of Hume and Moreland residents in different ways over this long period and developed strong ties with the East Timorese community in Melbourne.



Students at Arte Mambai Rai Husar stall, Aileu Expo



First meeting of the re-convened Aileu Friendship Commission

Building our Partnerships in Timor-Leste and Australia

The story of the friendship relationship with Aileu is above all a story of partnerships, or 'community alliances', as the title of the 2000 Blackburn Oration delivered by Xanana Gusmão expressed it. The primary partnerships or alliances are between:

- Moreland City Council and Hume City Council (known by the councils as the East Timor Partnership Project)
- The two councils and the Aileu Municipal Administration
- The two councils and their communities
- Friends of Aileu and a broad range of community organisations both locally and in Aileu.

The success of the friendship relationship over the past twenty-plus years is due to the commitment and efforts of many dedicated community members and partner organisation representatives in Timor-Leste and Australia. In Australia we especially note those who have served on the Friends of Aileu Community Committee, organised or assisted with fundraising and other community events, taken part in or supported friendship delegations to Aileu and friendship activities with Aileu partner organisations, or assisted with study tours and visits from Aileu.

The friendship arrangement could not have existed or continued without the ongoing support of the Hume and Moreland councils and individual councillors. The councils have jointly funded the project officer position for twenty years and provided support for the

Friends of Aileu Community Committee. The committee is chaired by councillors from Hume and Moreland in alternate years, and it provides a pathway for community members to participate in the project.

The Fruits of Friendship

Amongst the local benefits of the friendship relationship is the increased awareness of people in Moreland and Hume of the situation, needs and development of the very different community of Aileu in Timor-Leste, which is one of Australia's closest and poorest neighbours. The friendship relationship also provides the opportunity for community members to come together to develop real friendships with the people of Aileu and to work with them as they pursue their own goals for local democracy and sustainable development.



Friends of Aileu Community Committee members receive recognition awards from Moreland Mayor Cr Meghan Hopper

Lessons Learnt and Challenges Ahead

In the November 2020 the Communications Planning Workshop of the Friends of Aileu Community Committee reached agreement on a number of issues, including the importance of a new and evolving narrative for the journey of friendship into the future.

The Friends of Aileu and other early friendship groups commenced twenty years ago in response to Timor-Leste's struggle for independence, reconstruction and development. Recognising both continuity and evolution in our shared interests and concerns, we are now reflecting on the challenges of friendship and generational change: *How do we stay friends with the people of Aileu in East Timor?*

Friendships eventually wither and die unless they are nurtured, change with circumstances, and are renewed, valued, etc. *How do we achieve this over the next decade ahead?*

It is now important to re-articulate the friendship through an updated narrative for the coming years, maintaining support for local democracy and participation, and sharpening the focus of our partnerships for sustainable development. Issues of importance include collaboration on developing responses to post-fossil fuel futures, ways to address and respond to climate change, and programs to

support education for the future, deal with community determinants of health, promote sustainable regenerative agriculture and support local economic opportunities.

In terms of generational change, we are seeking more effective engagement with younger people. Our committee members are mainly from the generation that was active in the struggle for independence for Timor-Leste. We will need to consider succession planning for the committee and engagement with organisations with a younger membership that would be excited about supporting sustainable development in Timor-Leste.

Our communications goals, key messages and practical activities must emphasise engaging with younger people and providing space and opportunities for their leadership locally and in Aileu. We will need to identify issues and relationships with the potential to excite a new generation of interest and engagement in friendship between the communities of Moreland and Hume and those of Timor-Leste and Aileu.

Friends of Aileu has achieved much in the past twenty years. New challenges await, but the strength of our friendship bodes well for the future.

Aluta continua!



Lian Babadok (Voice of the Drum) performance group, Aileu



METAC welcome dinner Meadow Heights

Acknowledgements

The information for this history has come from files held by Moreland City Council, including Friends of Aileu Annual Reports 2011–2020, and from conversations with a number of people who generously provided their recollections and insights.

Foremost has been the history project subcommittee of the Friends of Aileu Community Committee, comprising Richard Brown, Glenyys Romanes, Anne Jungwirth, Glenda Lasslett and Chris Adams, Project Officer East Timor, working with author Elisabeth Jackson.

Thanks to all others who provided information for this history, including Rae Kingsbury, Jane Ellen, Yvonne Adami, Teresa Garcia, Martin Hall, Mick Harris and Carlo Carli.

Thanks to all past and present members of the Friends of Aileu Community Committee, Friends of Aileu partner organisations and individual, organisational and business supporters, the Aileu Municipal Administration and other partner organisations in Aileu and Timor-Leste, who have collaborated so well over the past 20 years.

Thanks also to members of the East Timorese community in Melbourne who over the years have supported activities if the Friends of Aileu over the years. A special thanks to those who have helped with interpreting and translation and with hosting visitors from Timor-Leste, including Ana Saldanha, Carla Chung, Elisabeth de Oliveira, Etervena Groenen, Katrina Langford, Joao Jong, Ismenio da Silva, Jose da Costa, Jose Pires, Lydia Chung, Marga Pires, Mayra Walsh and Mira Fonseca.

The Friends of Aileu are grateful to Elisabeth Jackson for volunteering to pull together the many stories and accounts of the various activities undertaken over the past 20 years and the responses in Aileu, to Judy Smart for volunteering and undertaking the copy editing. We also acknowledge the work of Sonia Barras, Centreforce, for the professional layout design and more.

The short history Elisabeth has written captures beautifully the story of how our friendship grew.



Working Group (L-R: Chris Adams, Glenda Lasslett, Glenyys Romanes, Anne Jungwirth, Richard Brown)

About the author, Elisabeth Jackson



Elisabeth was elected as a Councillor at Brunswick Council from 1979-1985 and 1988-1994; she was Mayor of Brunswick 1990-1991. During this latter term on Council, she became friends with Andy Ingham who was also on Brunswick Council from 1991. After Council amalgamations, Andy was later elected to Moreland Council and was instrumental in setting up the friendship arrangement and served as the inaugural Chair of the Friends of Aileu Community Committee, while Elisabeth participated as a community member of the Committee during its early stages.

Elisabeth has worked in public libraries for most of her career. As Library Manager and later CEO of the Hume-Moonee Valley Regional Library and after the Regional Library Corporation was disbanded, she became Manager of Library Services at

Moonee Valley. She was involved with the Library Books for East Timor project (now Libraries for Timor-Leste), which worked to set up access to library resources in the new nation.

Since retirement, Elisabeth has pursued an interest in history and has been Vice President of the Royal Historical Society of Victoria (RHSV) for several years. She collaborated with others on the production of two books designed to showcase the RHSV's images collection: *Remembering Melbourne* (2016) and *Melbourne's 20 Decades* (2019).

Elisabeth has lived in Brunswick for over four decades and has contributed articles to the Brunswick Community History Group's publications during that period.

Completing the story to date

The account of the friendship relationship presented here, as captured in Council records and with input from past and present members of the Friends of Aileu Community Committee and the Project Officers, is only part of the story. The Committee as a whole looks forward to supporting further phases of this project which can cover the recollections and perspectives of others, especially our partners and friends in Aileu.

Continuing in friendship

The Friends of Aileu Community Committee and supporters look forward to the continuation of the journey of friendship involving our Councils and communities and the Municipality and people of Aileu.





Moreland
City Council



Friends
of Aileu