

COMMITTEE MEMBERS AND ABBREVIATIONS

Port Phillip Community Steering Group (CSG)

Chairpersons

Cr Liz Johnstone, Mayor, City of Port Phillip
Tracey Curro

Committee members

David Spokes, CEO, City of Port Phillip
Cr David Brand, Deputy Mayor, City of Port Phillip
Anthony Hill
Balthasar Kehi
Berenice Nyland
Bill Armstrong
Chris Nyland
David Hofman
Giulie Waddell
Graham Lockwood
Graham Pitts
Jean Mclean
Lee Kirk
Linda Mills
Amanda Wimetal
Maryellen Davidson
Patsy Thatcher
Peter McEwan

Port Phillip Council External Relations Committee (ERC)

Committee members

Cr Liz Johnstone, Mayor, City of Port Phillip
Cr David Brand, Deputy Mayor, City of Port Phillip
Cr Darren Ray
David Spokes, CEO
Jill Hennessy
Geoff Oulton
David Yeouart
Murray Chick
Carol Tu
Lee Kirk

Suai Community Committee (SCC)

Members to be elected

Australian Volunteers International (AVI)

Volunteers

Andy McIntosh – 2000/2001
Sheryl Hazel – 2002/2003

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THOUGHTS FROM THE CEO

David Spokes

In September 2001, I had the opportunity to visit the town of Suai in East Timor. The visit was an opportunity to review how our friendship relationship with Suai was progressing. On a personal level it was a sobering and enlightening experience - one that reinforced the need for our ongoing commitment to this relationship.



Visiting Suai and having the opportunity to meet with the people of Suai reinforced for me, that while the friends of suai program is complex and challenging, it is ultimately rewarding. There is a lot more work that needs to be done by both communities on understanding each other in order to enhance the relationship.

The visit to Suai in 2001 was an opportunity to examine what was working and what wasn't working from the Suai community's perspective. It was during this visit that we reassessed the priorities and changed the focus and direction of our activities. We realised that in order to increase the effectiveness of our efforts we needed to focus on one major project at a time.

One of the lessons we have learned from the friendship agreement is that it will not be effective without a genuine desire to deal with changing circumstances. There needs to be open and honest discussion about how the relationship should develop as we learn more and more about what we can do for each other. What will not change will be our commitment to further developing the relationship for mutual benefit.

HOW THE SUAI – CITY OF PORT PHILLIP FRIENDSHIP STARTED

Berenice Nyland

To be honest, it was a bit of a suck it and see exercise because these sort of friendships were pretty new and untested in these sort of difficult circumstances. It is obviously very different to a sister city relationship, or a let's raise money to build a well in Africa somewhere sort of relationship. It's probably somewhere in between the two.

(Cr Julian Hill, former Port Phillip Mayor, interview notes, 7.11.02)

In September 1999, the City of Port Phillip agreed to support the concept of setting up a partnership agreement with a coastal town in East Timor. In December 1999, the City of Port Phillip hosted a forum in the South Melbourne Town Hall to discuss the concept with the community. The gathering was addressed by Abel Guterres in his capacity as Head of the Melbourne Office of Timorese Resistance (CNRT), National Commission for emergency aid. Abel suggested the town of Suai would be a suitable friendship community for Port Phillip. At that stage Anne Dunn, CEO, was a strong driving force for the project. Councillor David Brand attributes the introduction of the community friendship concept to the City of Port Phillip to Anne.

*Anne, I attribute this to Anne. She was very enthusiastic and there were others in the council who were active from the beginning. A large group of people working for the council were receptive. Councillors to a person were keen. One had reservations about the propriety of local government stepping beyond boundaries. There were qualms but everyone was too enthusiastic and the qualms did not get in the way. **(Cr Brand, interview notes, 7.11.02)***

In January 2000, the City of Port Phillip approved the establishment of a partnership with the town of Suai. Xanana Gusmao visited the City of Port Phillip on May 4, 2000 and along with Port Phillip councillors, signed the following Statement of Friendship:

In a spirit of friendship and cooperation between the citizens of Suai and the citizens of Port Phillip, this Statement of Friendship sets out our understanding and intent. We, the signatories to this statement, affirm the development of a ten year relationship between the elected representatives of Suai and Port Phillip, based on friendship and mutual respect. **The fundamental principle of this agreement is to recognise and promote the right of East Timorese people and the residents of Suai to manage their own destiny.** We agree to work together to achieve this end, whilst respecting each other's cultural heritage and customs.

The first councillor to go to Suai was Cr David Brand. The trip took place in February 2000.

*The trip was at the behest of Jean McLean. It was separate from council and organised by Norman Day. I was chosen for two reasons. The City of Port Phillip has a credible reputation in urban planning and I am an active member of the council. The other is because I have an enduring interest in urban design and of town planning in South East Asia. ... Architects, town planners etc were invited to go on the trip because of our professional literacies. **(Cr Brand, interview notes, 7.11.02)***

Mr Steve Dunn from the council also accompanied Cr Brand on this trip. The two were able to visit Suai.

Steve and I went to Suai separately. I can't remember why. Maybe we split to try to organise transport and came back together having organised different options. Steve went overland in a truck that took a full day and I had the incredible pleasure of flying over East Timor in a helicopter. I saw the scale of the country, the isolation of the villages, the scale of destruction. All this I got from the helicopter. I was shocked and amazed. ... It was an inspiring and exciting visit. It was unexpected. (Cr Brand, interview notes, 7.11.02)

The friends of suai program was formally launched in O'Donnell Gardens in St Kilda in March 2000. Many people in the community signed up as a friend of Suai and a Community Steering Group (CSG) was established and headed by television journalist Tracy Curro and the Mayor of the City of Port Phillip. Cr David Brand comments on this community involvement.

Another justification was that it proved to be a community building exercise. Our army relations, one went from non-existent to great. We also developed relations with rotary two. There was enormous support from the community. The council had an advocacy role as a voice for the local community. The council should lead the community and say what the community wants it to say. (Cr Brand, interview notes, 7.11.02)

In July 2000 the City of Port Phillip hosted two members of the Suai Community Group (SCG), Adriano Do Nascimento and Aquilino Guterres. In the first phase of the friendship there was considerable activity with mixed results. These activities included

- Community centre refurbished
- Shipping containers loaded with goods sent
- Visits from Suai to Port Phillip
- Visits from Port Phillip to Suai
- Selele preschool funds raised (not spent)
- AVI officer employed
- Hand tractor and rice mill supplied
- Generator purchase and installation
- Bicycles donated
- Truck donated
- Hospital equipment donated
- Fundraising conducted
- Training provided in Port Phillip
- English lessons in Suai
- Play "Tour of Duty" performed in East Timor and Melbourne
- Circle of Stones commemoration

The friends of suai was established to respond to needs and priorities expressed by the Suai community. A statement in the first friends of suai newsletter:



The vision driving friends of suai is Suai, as a thriving, self-determining community, through democratic processes. We believe that friends of suai can contribute to an increased cross-cultural tolerance in the City of Port Phillip, a heightened awareness of international issues, and an ability to make a difference as an individual. Success of the friends of suai program will be gauged by the number of personal, long lasting friendships developed between individuals in Port Phillip and Suai.

This now sounds well-meaning but incredibly naïve. The CSG and City of Port Phillip have made mistakes and in Suai the SCG has ceased to exist and the community is in the process of trying to re-establish a representative group. The aspirations Cr Hill expressed in the opening quote suggested we were going into uncharted waters and in fact the project has proved more difficult than ever imagined. However, Cr Hill feels the East Timorese themselves have strength:

What I remember from being there is that in amongst all of the tragedy and carnage and that, that they are a very resilient people (Cr Hill, interview notes 7.11.03)

Cr David Brand still strongly supports the idea of the council being involved in community building beyond its own boundaries

... that make it suitable. One is that it brings together communities. For example, schools getting in contact with schools. The second is the mentoring role the council can play in mentoring local communities that need to build local structures. ... This is a clinching reason to step outside its own boundaries. (Cr Brand, interview notes 7.11.03)

Notes

1. The 2nd /10th Medium Regiment is an artillery Army Reserve unit with its headquarters in St. Kilda. It has been granted "Freedom of Entry" to the City and has been a major supporter and fund-raiser.
2. Rotary has been involved in the CSG since its inception. Graham Lockwood describes Rotary's contributions in his article, Salele Pre School project -The Rotary perspective.

FRIENDS OF SUAI – REFLECTIONS OF CURRENT ACTIVITIES

Lee Kirk

This paper is for two reasons, one, to outline friends of suai activities that are currently running and two, to identify key challenges and obstacles that friends of suai are currently facing. We hope by outlining these challenges, that those engaged in friendship city relationships, will identify with and learn from our experiences and that this will generate interesting topics for discussion.

Port Phillip aims and objectives have changed quite significantly from the ideas generated during the formation period of friends of suai. There are several reasons for this including the difficulty in communication, logistics, different priorities and realities of communities as well as both communities learning to work across cultural differences.

Below is an outline of activities, challenges and obstacles faced. The community in Suai has not had a chance to contribute to this piece of work, which would be much more diverse if they had.

Community Centre

The refurbishment of the Suai Community Centre was completed late 2001 and to date several activities are running from the community centre

Suai Community Committee

The aim of the Suai Community Committee was to

- facilitate in developing policies and provide direction for the friends of suai in Covalima
- determine community needs through ongoing consultation and communication
- communicate the wishes of the Suai community, through the International Adviser, to City of Port Phillip
- inform the local community of development of the friends of suai program
- ensure transparency of processes through clear communication with the Suai community.

The first community committee was created in 2000 - 2001 when our Australian Volunteer International (AVI) placement was based in Suai. When the AVI volunteer left, due to sickness, the group became segregated and disunited due to lack of communication and direction.

Our second AVI placement arrived in October 2002. A community consultation took place in January 2003 with a broad range of community members numbering over 80 participants. This meeting voted on the structure of the community committee, identified a value statement, programme direction and principles of cooperation (please refer to draft mission statement and development plan from the community in East Timor). These documents are currently waiting to be approved by the community. An election of the new committee was to take place on March 8, 2003 but due to sickness our AVI placement has been evacuated and the meeting has been postponed for the near future.

Challenges and obstacles

No clear line of communication between the community committee in Suai and the City of Port Phillip when there is no AVI placement on the ground has been one of the single most important issues that have hindered the progression of the friends of suai activities. Another important issue is the allocation of resources. East Timorese Culture places family to the forefront of responsibilities and it is often the obligation of the individual to share resources with family members before the wider community. How do you keep resources for the community when you have the influences of both culture and poverty?



Lack of trust in the community of Suai of both community members and foreigners also impacts significantly. This is potentially created due to the impact of war on the community and individual.

The placement of an AVI volunteer has proved to be successful in many aspects, though sickness has meant that the volunteer either leaves early or is evacuated on a regular basis to get medical treatment not available in Suai.

Radio station

Suai local radio station commenced operations in August 2002. Originally funded by the World Bank, the radio station was broadcasting every morning and night seven days a week. As of January 2003 the World Bank cut funding, which means that they are broadcasting only at night when there is electricity available. Currently electricity is available three nights on and one night off in an ad hoc manner. The radio station is in the process of writing a proposal for funding that will be distributed to friends of suai and Aid agencies working in East Timor. Friends of suai are very interested in supporting this initiative as we feel that local media is an important aspect of rebuilding the community.

Challenges and obstacles

Volunteers at the radio station have begun to complain about the costs of volunteering and are requesting money for wages or the very least to cover transportation. They have tried to sell advertising space but this has not generated enough income to pay for diesel for the generator. Currently the Peace Keeping Forces have been maintaining the equipment for the radio. When the Peace Keeping Forces leave maintenance will potentially become an obstacle for the radio station.

Computer lessons

Computer lessons for community members began in late August 2002. Volunteer teachers ran the classes and students paid \$US 10 for a three month course. This money is used to buy fuel for the generator. The first round of courses finished on December 7, 2002 and certificates were presented to students who successfully completed. The week of March 24 – 29, 2003 the NGO forum (a local NGO body) held a week's intensive computer course for NGO's in the Suai district. This includes training in Word, Excel, Power Point and Access.

Challenges and obstacles

Originally three teachers donated their time three days a week for the three-month training course for community members. By the end of the course only one teacher remained because they wanted a wage for their work. They approached the students to pay more but students could not afford to pay. Friends of suai are looking at paying teachers but feels that in the long term this could be unsustainable but also realises the importance of computer training for employment opportunities. Transportation has also impacted heavily on this activity for students and teachers, it requires either money for public transport or time for walking.

Target groups also need to be clarified as the Youth Centre in Suai also runs computer courses and we do not want to create competition between the two bodies, ultimately we would like them to complement each other. The computers that have been donated to the community centre are of poor quality and need to be improved. Currently most computers do not have CD ROMs, which is proving to be difficult in terms of loading programmes for training. Power surges from the local electricity supply are also playing havoc with the computers with repairs taking weeks to achieve due to the isolation of the area.

Bakery

In August 2002 the Fijian Army requested space at the community centre to create a bakery for ten women in the area to use as an income-generating project. Ten women were identified and the Fijians built an oven and donated all equipment and cooking ingredients (in large quantities) for the women to have a solid base to begin the activity. The idea was for the women to target both the foreigner and local markets to generate an income to insure long-term sustainability.

Challenges and obstacles

The Fijians used one of their translators to identify the ten women so they are from the one sub district in Suai. The sub district coordinators of Suai requested that women should be used from all the sub districts and claimed that the project was bias. This created a situation where the women felt uncomfortable, as there was much discussion about the bakery in the community. This I feel was for several reasons, most notably the amount of equipment and ingredients that was donated to the project and several people witnessing the women walking home with boxes of jam, flour etc.

The women also began to charge exorbitant prices for their produce because of poor communication at the beginning of the project. They believed that they were to sell to foreigners only and excluded the local community from their market, this once again caused conflict at a local level and the prices were so high that foreigners also began not to buy from them. Little income was generated so the ten women were receiving very little money. Around this period the New Zealand army began to pull out of Suai and they were also donating huge amounts of flour, jam etc to the bakery.

The women at this point had not put away any money for the future because they believed that the produce would continue to be donated to the bakery. The women have excellent cooking skills but lack significantly in business skills. Training was given to the women and they began to itemise what they are using every day and placing the money aside for the future. Internal conflicts started to arise at this point and the group began to segregate. The Bakery is currently closed due the leader falling pregnant and the impact of the above issues. It has been identified that the bakery needs a mentor to continue business skills training and help mediate the internal conflicts that are taking place. The majority of the women involved are keen to begin work again.

Community forum

The community forum will be held fortnightly at the community centre for local and international NGO's to coordinate activities and allocation of resources in the Suai NGO community

Challenges and obstacles

Finding a day that all NGO's can attend.

Intrepid travel

Intrepid travel is currently considering using the Community Centre for accommodation whilst travelling through Suai. This project is pending on Suai community committee approval. It is estimated that it will take \$AUD 2000 for the initial outlay of equipment required for this to be achieved. There is a potential for the Community Centre to generate around \$AUD 4000 per year, which will contribute to the running cost, including wages.

Challenges and obstacles

For the community to create as much income as possible from this venture. Some examples could be - organise women in the area to cook for visitors, tour guides, selling of arts and craft etc.

Youth Centre

The Suai Youth Centre was formed in early 2000 with original funding from the International Rescue Committee. Friends of suai were approached early 2002 with a funding proposal from the Youth Centre due to the International Rescue Committee ceasing their commitment. Since that time we have committed to funding the project for a twelve-month period, have facilitated the donation of a 4WD troop carrier - donated by Balwyn Rotary and our AVI volunteer has started financial training.

The youth centre run a myriad of projects, which include English and Portuguese lessons, computer lessons, and Domestic violence workshops for youth, sporting activities and agricultural workshops. They also have a mechanics workshop, with equipment donated by the New Zealand army. They hope that some of these activities will be able to create income so they can support themselves in the future.

Challenges and obstacles

The community committee of the Youth Centre have contributed little to the activities due to several reasons. The formation of the committee was made at the beginning of 2000 and some of the most respected members of the community were identified, due to their standing in the community. In the beginning this worked well but as more and more project were created these peoples time and energy were directed elsewhere. I think the important lesson here is that the most outstanding members of the community are often called upon in all projects which limits their capacity to contribute to the day-to-day running of activities.

The Manager, Ergilio is currently considering resigning. He has managed the Youth Centre since it's inception and has done a brilliant job. He feels that other people are not as involved as they could be because every-one feels he can do the job by himself, which he cannot. He believes if he resigns other members of the community will have the opportunity to experience, learn and contribute to the project hence spreading skills and knowledge.

Kobalima Students and Youth Association

Kobalima Students and Youth Association is comprised of approximately 400 students from the Covalima District who are based in Dili studying at the various universities. Friends of suai first began forming a relationship with this organisation in May 2002 at the Suai independent day celebrations. We supplied funds for a conference that the association organised – In Suai – which went over a two day period and covered issue ranging from boarder control and civil society participation in government, to mention a few.

Since that time the relationship has grown and we have donated 10 computers, books from Albert College have been sent and funding has been supplied for the Association to rent a room in Dili for computer lessons and a library.



Challenges and obstacles

The challenges of getting donated goods to Dili was long and time consuming with certain items going missing from the port in Dili. Finding a space for these to be placed was also time consuming and organising a teacher for training has been a continual problem. Currently the association has had arguments at a management level, which has impacted heavily on relationships. Our AVI placement on her return will be meeting with the group to help resolve these issues.

Where to from here?

Currently the two most pending issues facing friends of suai are

- 1. Our AVI Volunteer has been evacuated due to sickness with the possibility of not returning due to health reasons.*
- 2. Telecommunications to all groups that we are working with have been cut due to the switch from Telstra Australia and Telstra Timor.*

These two issues impact heavily on what we are doing. The election of the community committee was to take place on March 8, 2003 and this has not occurred due to our AVI placement, becoming extremely ill necessitating her evacuation. She has expressed great distress about the possibility of not returning. She believes there is a real desire from the community in Suai to see the friends of suai grow and for the community to take responsibility for it. There is obviously great desire in both communities for this to work and we both need to be creative in achieving our goals. How are we going to resolve these issues? I do not know. I know that I cannot coordinate, help resolve issues and contribute to an outcome from a desk in Melbourne with no communication to the community in Suai. I also know that this will not last forever.

We need to not only look at the community in Suai we also need to turn towards the community here in Port Phillip and Australia. We are a friendship city relationship. I see an amazing passion here in Port Phillip of wanting to be friends with people in Suai. What is friendship? It understands the situation the other people face, it knows a history, it is a two way relationship and most importantly it takes time to form. I have been in Melbourne for 12 months and am only now beginning to meet other people spread all over Melbourne that have friendship city relationships with other communities in East Timor. Each person I speak to also has the same problems that we are facing here in Port Phillip. It's the frustration of not being able to communicate to a broad range of community members due to lack of telephones, a person on the ground, a common language, common culture, and I also think an understanding of the situation.

We need to spend time forming friendships across land, borders, seas and cultures. We have a strong community here in Port Phillip, Victoria and Australia and we all have ideas, knowledge and different understanding of the situation. We need to give ourselves time to understand the complexities of working in East Timor instead of dropping money in the community and saying that we have completed a project, ultimately making us feel good. The reality is that projects takes time and cause ramifications both positive and negative in the community.



Fundraising money and activities already undertaken are an important part of the friendship city relationship but this is not the only way to achieve our outcome. This is friendship and we need to spend time and money with our community both locally and nationally by sharing experiences, resource our local libraries and creating events that educate our community to truly understanding the realities that the people in East Timor are facing. This process will also form strong bonds of friendship here in Australia at a local, state and national level and enhance the friendship that we are trying to create in East Timor

The reality is, East Timor has just been through a 25-year war - all basic infrastructures have been destroyed, the community needs time to heal and we here in Australia need time to understand. We all want to help but we are not aid agencies. We do not have the resources that aid agencies have nor do we have the many years of skills and experiences. We also differ because we have a long term commitment to the idea of forming friendships in East Timor. We all want to contribute to the rebuilding of East Timor but I don't think enough time has gone into exploring the idea of how we can accomplish this. We have all fallen into the ideal that money fixes all problems. This is not the case and we all know it.

I would like to see a strong network of community members in Port Phillip discussing these issues and I would also like to see a strong network of friendship city relationships across Australia begin to form strong networks so we can share our experiences, challenges and contacts. We need to educate, network and form strong relationships in Australia. The people in both communities know the answers to these issues. We need to tap into this knowledge so all of us can gain an understanding of the issues we are facing and the next steps that need to be taken.

DRAFT STRATEGIC PLAN

This document is the result of a one day community meeting held at the Suai Community Centre. Over 80 people participated in this event. The strategic plan is in draft form still to be resubmitted to the community for approval.

Suai Community Committeefriends of suai

Purpose

To work in partnership with the community to enhance the quality of life for each and every person in the community, with a special focus on resourcing young people and those with little personal resources.

Values

The Suai Community Collective acknowledges that many people within its community are still suffering. In response to this condition the collective will work towards being responsive to the many community needs and to the long term development of the community through ongoing community consultation. Development processes will be respectful and inclusive of traditional culture.

It is important that the activities of the collective are transparent and that support systems are developed to ensure that the community has access to information that will allow their involvement in community decision making.

The collective is committed to the principles of unity within the community, to a community free from discrimination where all men and women are equal and processes that are free from collusion, corruption and nepotism.

The collective will also respect existing human rights conventions. Whilst appreciating the support and resourcing provided by the friends of suai and Port Phillip, the community needs to take responsibility for itself and its own outcomes.

Rights

We are aware that many people within our community are unaware of their rights and when they are being denied. We believe that people in our community have the following rights:

- The right to be listened to
- The right to live safely without threat of violence
- The right to choice and the knowledge of the choices available to us
- The right to be treated equally
- The right to work, education and training
- The freedom to express ideas
- The right to live in prosperity and to live in peace
- The right to democratic freedom
- The right to have our basic human rights met.
- The right to self determination
- The right to protest
- The right to contribute to the development of our country
- The right to adequate health care
- The right to expect respect from each other
- The right to comment on the performance paid positions of the Community Collective and the friends of suai

Relationship – Suai Community/friends of suai

The Suai community whilst requesting the support of the friends of suai in the development and resourcing of local projects, wish to clearly state that any projects developed need to be owned by the community. In addition, we wish to define our friendship as one where both parties work towards improved outcomes for the community in a co operative and respectful way.

The community of Suai wish to acknowledge and support the role of the friends of suai in our community, especially in our current time of need, resulting from the losses the community experienced as part of the struggle for an independent East Timor. The Suai Community Collective request that the friends of suai and the City of Port Phillip, commit to the following principles of co operation, in the interest of maintaining a good relationship between both parties.

That the friends of suai

- agree to a transparent process ensuring that the community is kept informed of any development and activities
- work in a coordinated way with other NGO's in the community
- follow through on development ideas (currently the community feels there is a lack of implementation)
- maintain a role of mediator/facilitator in assisting the people of Suai to develop ideas through to implementation through the continued funding an International Advisor
- respond to needs as identified by the Community
- support the new management structure and provide clear guidance
- actively motivate the community to work towards ending the suffering that people are currently experiencing
- be responsible for the administration and management of programs.

Communications from the City of Port Phillip will be through the International Advisor, to the Suai Community Collective management and through the Timorese Advisor to the Village Leaders and the community.

That the Suai Community Collective

- promote the work of the friends of suai throughout the community
- work hard for the interests of the community and ensure that they keep themselves informed of and understand the needs and issues affecting the people.

Communication with the City of Port Phillip from the community will be via Village Leader to Timorese Advisor and from the Suai Community Collective management via the International Advisor to the City of Port Phillip and the friends of suai.

DRAFT DEVELOPMENT PLAN

Goal one

Provide a range of ongoing education and training options that will provide increased choice and improvements to the quality of life

Actions

- increase access to vocational training within the community including courses in the following areas:
 - computer literacy
 - language
 - carpentry
 - mechanics
 - sewing and weaving
 - construction of traditional housing
- increase access to overseas study scholarships for under graduate and postgraduate study.
- increase access to apprenticeships and traineeships
- develop a recreational and academic library in Suai
- improve quality of primary and secondary education.



Goal two

Development of a range of economic development opportunities for the people of Suai.

Actions

- encourage individuals and groups to develop enterprise and business ideas
- increase ability for individuals and groups to develop the skills necessary to successfully implant and run a business or enterprise
- establish and support bakery projects
- increased skills in economic management
- increased skills in human resource management.

Goal three

Improve agricultural systems that are sustainable, economical viable and environmentally compatible.

Actions

- identify and implement organic agricultural practices appropriate to the region
- increased catches for fishery enterprises using economical viable practices
- increased access to farming equipment including tractors
- increased access to seed and seedling at times of crop failure
- provide viable livestock for breeding purposes
- increase access to training in all areas of agriculture and animal husbandry
- develop an irrigation system that assures water security during times of drought.

Goal four

Improve access to and quality of health care.

Actions

- provision and maintenance of clinics in each sub district/village
- increase access to quality training for health care workers
- improve access to medication and medical supplies for all clinics and hospitals
- develop a system and environment that cares for orphans
- develop strategies to ensure food security especially in times of drought.

Goal five

Improve infrastructure in the Covalima District.

Actions

- develop a multi purpose sports field in Suai
- provide a road service between Fohorem, Fatumea and Maukatur
- provide roof the primary school building in Fatululik
- develop a water system for Dato Tolu (Fohorem) and Suai.

PORT PHILLIP – SUAI

friends of suai – timeline

September 1999	City of Port Phillip commit support to the idea of setting up a partnership with a coastal town in East Timor
November 1999	Bicycles donated for Suai – end up in Dili
December 1999	Community Forum in held in South Melbourne Town Hall – Suai named
February 2000	St Kilda festival – donations of rice and clothing
February 2000	Cr David Brand and Steve Dunn visit Suai
March 2000	friends of suai formally launched and Community Steering Group established
March 2000	Children's art selected for Christmas cards now being sold at the Charity Shop
May 2000	Xanana Gusmao and Port Phillip Councillors sign Friendship Agreement
June 2000	\$23,000 raised at the 2nd/10th Medium Regiment Fundraising Ball
July 2000	State Government donate hospital equipment and furniture
July 2000	Suai Community Group formed
July 2000	Adriano Do Nascimento and Aquilino Guterres visited from Suai
August 2000	4wd vehicle donated
September 2000	Six community and council members visit East Timor
September 2000	Three shipping containers sent to Suai
October 2000	Appointment of Andrew McIntosh to implement projects in Suai and support local committee
February 2001	Give gold for Suai – Fundraiser held at St Kilda Festival
February 2001	Adriano and Alvaro do Nascimento receive training in Port Phillip in leadership and local administration
February 2001	Administration training for secondary teachers from the Ava Maria High School (Suai) at Elwood College
June 2001	Rotary South Melbourne successful in gaining a Rotary International “Helping Hand Grant” towards the refurbishment of a Selele pre-school
August 2001	The shipping containers arrive in Dili
September 2001	David Spokes, CEO CoPP and Astrid Petersen visit Suai
September 2001	The play “Tour of Duty” performed in Dili and Suai
September 2001	Circle of Stones commemoration
September 2001	Generator for community centre in Suai purchased
October 2001	Play “Tour of Duty” performed at the Melbourne festival
October 2001	Astrid Petersen visits Suai
October 2001	Generator installed at community centre in Suai

February 2002	Balthasar Kehi (CSG) visits East Timor
April 2002	Lee Kirk employed as friend of suai coordinator
April 2002	CoPP supplies funding for Suai Independence Day celebrations
May 2002	Cr Darren Ray, Mayor and friends of suai coordinator travel to East Timor for Independence Day celebrations. May 9 - 19. Opening of the friends of suai containers with Village Chiefs, students and local NGO's helping with the distribution process
May 2002	Kobalima Students and Youth Association – CoPP supported a 2 day conference held in Suai. Issues covered border control and civil society participation in Local Government. CoPP presented with the development plan from Covalima district
June 2002	Ten computers and four boxes of books sent to the Kobalima Students and Youth Association – (Computers donated by IT Aid)
July 2002	Balwyn Rotary Club, through consultation with friends of suai send brand new 4WD troop carrier to Suai for the Suai Youth Centre
August 2002	Fundraising conducted through CoPP rates notices
August 2002	Computer lessons start at the community centre in Suai
August 2002	Suai local radio station opens at the community centre. A bakery also commences operation
September 2002	Academic project by CSG members concerning Salele Pre School Project commences
October 2002	Youth Centre received funding from friends of suai for operation costs for first 3-months
October 2002	Placement of AVI volunteer Sheryl Hazel. Lee Kirk, friends of suai coordinator travelled with AVI volunteer to Suai for a threeweek period.
November 2002	The original project of a saw mill being sent to Suai has changed and the money will now be used for a revegetation project, a joint venture between Forestry Tasmania and the Forestry Department in Suai.
November 2002	Appointment of Timorese to work along side AVI placement for an interim period until community committee is re established
December 2002	December 7, community centre computer lessons finished and certificates distributed
December 2002	Tais sent from Suai to be used as corporate gifts at the City of Port Phillip
December 2002	Communications begin with Adventure travel to use Suai Community Centre as a base for people to stay. Money will go to operation cost of the centre
December 2002	Sheryl Hazel, AVI volunteer, evacuated to Australia due to a motorbike accident and dengue fever
December 2002	Community children's Christmas celebrations at community centre saw over 28 different acts performed. The celebrations were well attended by the community.

January 2003	Community meeting to establish new committee in Suai takes place. There were over 60 participants (40% women) and decisions on the community committee structure, value statement, programme direction and principals of cooperation between friends of suai and Suai community. Kobalima students and Youth Association receive funding for rent of an office space and maintenance to building.
January 2003	Community radio only broadcasting at times when the town has electricity due to funding being cut from the World Bank. friends of suai looking at funding.
February 2003	Training for the Youth Centre in financial management
February 2003	Money to be sent to Suai hospital to supply immediate assistance for children being brought to the hospital with malnutrition. The drought has exacerbated nutrition problems.
February 2003	Communication with the Education Department in Suai concerning the Salele pre school project.
February 2003	Sheryl Hazel placed in Hospital for seven days due to Malaria
February 2003	Kobalima Students and Youth Association faced problems with management structure.
March 2003	Sheryl Hazel evacuated due to second bout of malaria
March 2003	All contact with Suai cut due to the changeover of telecommunication networks.
March 2003	Jean McLean, CSG member, addressed the CSG on political issues in East Timor.
March 2003	Tracy Curro, CSG Chair, had a viewing of her documentary "Xanana, the man, the nation". Plans are underway to use for a fundraising effort.
March 2003	NGO Forum held a one week intensive computer course for local NGO's operating in the town of Suai
April 2003	East Timor Expo and Conference.
May 2003	Yanana a man a nation by Tracey Curro. Federation Square, 6:30pm - 8:30pm

HEALING: AMNESTY OR JUSTICE

Balthasar Kehi

Friends of suai: Circle of Stones 2nd Anniversary of Suai Massacre: September 6, 1999

September 6, 2001, 6.30 pm, St. Kilda Town Hall , Melbourne

A speech delivered at St Kilda Town Hall, Melbourne, Australia, on September 6, 2001, in commemorating the 2nd anniversary of the massacre of more than two hundred people in the Church of Suai, East Timor, on September 6, 1999

What makes the event tonight happen and what brought you here tonight is your sense of solidarity with and sense of justice for the people of Suai in East Timor. Two years have elapsed. But your feeling of solidarity remains. It was tonight, two years ago, that more than two hundred people in the Cathedral of Suai, mostly women and children, including three priests, were slaughtered. Their crime was their demand, for their rights to freedom and self-determination, the very rights that their killers and oppressors demanded from the Dutch and the Japanese more than fifty years ago. The Indonesians denied, more intensively and successfully, to the East Timorese, the very rights that they had demanded from their former colonisers, the Dutch and the Japanese.

One year ago, tonight, Cr Julian Hill, the Mayor of the City of Port Philip and several council members were in Suai commemorating the first anniversary of the massacre. Jen Hughes whose film we have just watched was there capturing the event. Your solidarity that has taken different forms, including the event tonight, helps ease the burden of the past atrocities, heal the wounds, and strengthen the hope for justice and peace in East Timor.

Indeed, I am impressed and inspired by the humanitarian idealism of 20 young girls of sixteen who are present here tonight. Their sense of justice and concern for the betterment of our humanity have driven them to raise funds for the people in Suai. There are few young people of your age who have such a noble idealism. You are lucky to have it in such a young age. It is people like you who make a difference to our society, who contribute to the creation of a better world for people to live together, a world with less injustice, violence and misery. In a way you remind me of the life of Anne Frank, a little Jewish girl whose life has deeply affected the millions who have read her diary. The brutality of the Nazis did not deprive her of hope for humanity. Her humanising words reflect her hope for and faith in our humanity in spite of cruelty: "In spite of everything I believe that people are good at heart".

Two young girls of 18, Katarina and Brianny, from Melbourne are in Timor teaching English to the young Timorese. Katarina just returned to Timor. She and four of her friends drove two trucks full of donations from Melbourne to Darwin. And then they had the trucks shipped to Dili. She visited Suai and stayed there for a couple of days.

I was in Suai a few months ago. I was welcomed with tears by my family members and relatives in Suai and Fatumea, my place of birth, near the border. Widows and fatherless children, including the wives and children of my cousins, were still under the constant shadow of horror and loss. During a religious service in the Church of Suai where people were slaughtered I could not hold back my tears. The church and the priest house where the massacre took place and the circle of stones generated in me a feeling of awe and sacredness. On my first night in Suai I saw and heard a group of children sitting on a side walk and singing together. It is a heroic and tragic song about the September 6 tragedy. Words in Tetum, their mother tongue, which they used to describe the atrocities, are very moving. This song was sung by children in many different villages that I visited. Singing this song is a way of keeping the memory alive and a form of psychological catharsis.





There are experiences worth remembering and there are those worth forgetting. There should be a balance between too much remembering and too much forgetting of the bitter past. We are here tonight to keep the memory of September 6, 1999 alive. It is not the memory of joy or happiness. Rather it is the memory of human cruelty or brutality that goes against our sense of decency, and sense of justice. We are here tonight to keep alive the memory of such horrendous crimes against our humanity, to remind ourselves and the world that such crimes should not be forgotten until the perpetrators are brought to justice, that perpetrators should not just get away with their deeds.

Crimes against humanity are crimes against all of us, crimes against our sense of decency and justice. The purpose of keeping the memory of the brutality alive is not just to show our solidarity with the victims, but more importantly to condemn those acts of cruelty and to prevent their repetition anywhere in the world. Repetition can only be prevented if those who are guilty of the crime are brought to justice at national or international level, through national and international courts.

On an international scale, the memory of the atrocities in different parts of the world is short-lived. As Milan Kundera puts it: "The bloody massacre in Bangladesh quickly covered over the memory of the Russian invasion of Czechoslovakia, the assassination of Allende drowned out the groan of Bangladesh, the war in the Sinai desert made people forget Allende, the Cambodian massacre made people forget Sinai, and so on and so forth until ultimately everyone lets everything be forgotten" (Milan Kundera, *The Book of Laughing and Forgetting*. London: Faber and Faber, 1982, p.7)

I fear that the atrocities in East Timor will be forgotten on an international scale as time goes by. The perpetrators or those who orchestrated the mass murder and mass destruction will go unpunished. New atrocities may start again in Indonesia, such as in Aceh and West Papua, in fact, atrocities in Aceh and West Papua had been committed for many years during Suharto's regime and are still being committed now, or other different parts of the world, perhaps at a greater magnitude. The circle of violence and legal impunity will remain unbroken. The beastilisation of our humanity will continue. Two years have gone by since the mass killings and destruction in East Timor. One year has elapsed since the killing of the three committed international humanitarian workers in West Timor. Instead of being brought to justice, the perpetrators have been promoted and hailed as national heroes, defenders of national territorial integrity of Indonesia.

Suggestions about resuming military ties with Indonesia have already been made by the US and Australian governments, while those who are guilty of crimes against humanity in East Timor still enjoy legal impunity and power, although Gerard Evans ("Indonesia: My Mistake", *The Age*, July 26, 2001, p. 15) in his mea culpa humbly acknowledged that many of the Australians earlier training efforts with the Indonesian military helped only to produce more professional human rights abusers (*The Age*, July 26, 2001, p. 15). There is a split between two influential East Timorese leaders: Xanana Gusmao and Bishop Belo, as far as the perpetrators of atrocities is concerned (*South China Morning Post*, August 29, 2001, *The Age*, Tuesday, August 28, 2001). While Xanana is for granting a blanket amnesty to perpetrators of serious crime, Bishop Belo is for a fair trial and persecution of the perpetrators.

Belo's view is shared by most victims of political violence. As you saw in Jen Hughes' film, the victims in Suai demand justice as a *conditio sine quo non* for peace. Demanding justice is not revenge. One wonders whether peace and stability in East Timor, in Indonesia and other parts of the world suffering from similar atrocities can be achieved and secured by granting the blanket of amnesty to perpetrators of crimes against humanity. One also may wonder whether amnesties to such horrendous crimes against humanity are not morally suspect and are not, what is hoped for by the perpetrators. The world and East Timor are confronted with two difficult choices: granting amnesty or bringing to justice the perpetrators.

Either choice, amnesty or persecution, has its own consequence for peace, stability and human rights protection in East Timor and Indonesia, the country of the architects of mass murders and destruction. If granting the blanket of amnesty is the option, the possible consequences might follow may include.

Negative consequences

1. The atrocities will be too soon forgotten or buried and victims are condemned to a terrible pain, hatred and revenge.
2. The repetition of the atrocities is likely to happen in East Timor or in Indonesia, such as in Aceh or West Papua, and cycle of violence will continue. In fact these atrocities have been repeated in Aceh, the Mollucas and several parts of Indonesia.
3. Legal impunity is granted and as such our sense of justice is not served.
4. The rule of law is not embraced. Here the question arise: Why should someone who murders one person be brought to justice, while one or those who mastermind the mass murder are given amnesty? Why should some one who steals a few hundred dollars to survive be tried, while those who orchestrate the massive destruction in East Timor, those like Suharto and his family who plundered billions of dollars, go free?

I am reminded of the fate of Jean Valjean in Victor Hugo's *Les Miserables*. Valjean was sentenced to five years in prison because he stole a loaf of bread to maintain his life, while those who created hell for millions of women, children and men like Jean Valjean enjoyed their lives above the law of justice. A few months ago, a pro-independence man, was sentenced to seven years by the court in East Timor. His crime was that he killed a pro-Indonesian man. That is not unfair. But why have none of those

who masterminded the massive killings, destruction, torture and rape in East Timor has been brought to justice thus far. Why have none of those who murdered three international members of UNHCR in West Timor been brought to justice either? How would the man in prison feel as far as justice is concerned? How would one react to this case as far as her or his sense of justice is concerned? Why should criminal law be applied to the murderer of one person (who had connection with the perpetrators of serious crimes) and not to mass murderers?

Positive consequences

1. Much time, energy and money will not be wasted for investigating and persecuting the human rights abusers and criminals.
2. The atrocities of the past will not be too much remembered and as such time and energy can be used for moving to the future, for economic development. But one wonders whether uncoupled with justice, economic development benefits common people? What does development mean without justice? Is not justice the foundation and goal of human development? If justice is not the foundation and goal of economic development, I fear that East Timor will follow Suharto's Indonesia or Marcos's Philippines, in the sense that economic development will be only for the minority elite.
3. National reconciliation and unity are made possible. But one wonders whether a genuine reconciliation and national unity are possible without justice.

If bringing the perpetrators to justice is the option, then these consequences might follow.

Positive consequences

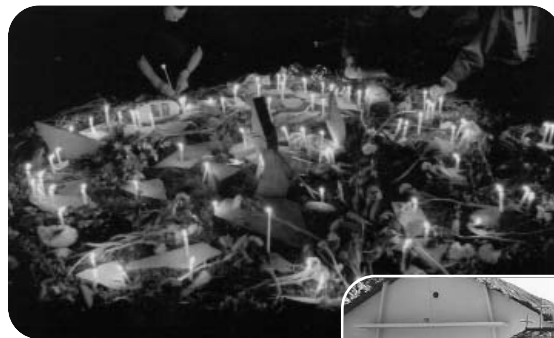
1. The rule of law and the sense of justice are embraced and served.
2. The repetition of atrocities is prevented or will be unlikely to happen.
3. The victims and survivors will put their past behind and a true healing could occur.
4. A clear message is sent to those who committed atrocities that they would be held accountable under the law, that there will no hiding place for them in the world.
5. The circle of impunity and violence is broken.
6. Respect for human rights and peace can be secured.

Negative consequences

1. Setting up an international criminal court to persecute those who committed crimes against humanity is costly and politically complicated. Money, time and energy would be wasted.
2. Some members of the UN security council, such as China, would veto against it for fear of its human rights violation in Tibet.

Of course the problems are more complex and complicated than what I have described and argued. My purpose here is to offer some food for thought, reflection and discussion

Allow me to conclude with a Sarajevo joke, which matches atrocities committed by the Indonesian armies and militias in East Timor: "When someone kills a person, he is put in prison. When someone kills 20 people he is declared mentally insane. When someone kills 200.000 people, he is granted amnesty, even invited to Geneva or New York for peace negotiation".



Circle of Stones, City of Port Phillip



Circle of Stones, Suai

POLITICAL BACKGROUND: ADDRESS TO THE CSG

Jean McLean

Jean McLean, retired politician and well known activist has had considerable contact with East Timor over the years. Jean has supported the East Timorese struggle for freedom. She has visited the country on many occasions, led delegations, been an invited UN observer and is presently involved in the establishment of the Dili Institute of Technology through the Victoria University. Jean is also a Port Phillip resident and member of the friends of suai community group. On February 19 Jean addressed the CSG on some of the political challenges facing East Timor. The transcribed speech runs for fourteen pages so the following are selected quotes.

I've been involved in East Timor politics and I've been involved in Australian politics. In fact I've been involved in both for many, many years and I think we've got to keep in mind that East Timor is a very new democracy. The parties and politicians who ran for election were a combination of those with past experiences, some from outside the country, from Portugal and Mozambique, and some were from Australia. The largest group being Fretilin of course who represented those who had struggled since 1975 and had fought the Indonesians for their independence.

Looking at all the various problems confronting the politicians a major one is they have no basic structural support. There are no officers, or offices, only one shared by all the departments. They have no departments and this came about partly because of the destruction of East Timor's infrastructure by the Indonesian army and the Timorese militia following the announcement of the ballot. There was also a complete lack of training of people by the Indonesians so they were not ready to manage their own country.

The parliamentarians have no electorates and therefore no communication with their constituents. Because they don't have an electorate as such the idea was that they would visit their home towns and meet people there. The UN has supplied the funds for them to go to their home towns in an attempt to address this issue. The funding is for a one off visit.

Again when looking at all this it has to be remembered that for 450 years there was Portuguese rule and then 25 years of Indonesian rule and there was no attempt to train the East Timorese people as public servants. Another thing to keep in mind is that East Timor is an agrarian society. The Indonesian violence that drove people into Dili created the situation that people did not have their usual ability to sustain themselves and thus there is the problem of employment.

These are some of the issues one needs to look at if one is trying to talk about politics and trying to judge their politicians and political parties from where we sit. I don't believe it is the slightest bit valid. For instance, Amelia Peres is in charge of the development plan for Timor and what an enormous task that is. People are given jobs. Imagine if I had to plan Australia? I just might do that tomorrow. It's very, very difficult.

There are also incredible outside pressures. In 1999 there was a meeting in Melbourne here to start discussions about sustainable development and some excellent decisions were made. East Timor would be completely green, clean and organic. Now that they have their independence the sort of people who are knocking at the door are the chemical companies and the genetic engineering food companies. How individuals stop these pressures from winning is almost



impossible without proper knowledge and support from relevant departments. Our Minister can't sustain the pressure for genetically engineered food trials and if our people give in how on earth can that sort of pressure, be expected to be ignored by East Timorese. Especially when there is usually finance and assistance tied to those sorts of things.

Jean went on to discuss the role of the media and how the rumour mill can work and concluded by discussing the role Xanana Gusmao has to play in East Timor and emphasising the potential of projects like friends of Suai.

Xanana Gusmao has an absolutely vital role in Timor. Anywhere he goes he is adored and he is always surrounded by people. He doesn't do everything right and is the first to admit it. For someone who spent the war up in the mountains and then in gaol he hasn't done badly. I think he is a person who genuinely wants to change things. It's important to have the respected leaders like Xanana, Horta and Alkatiri. I think they need a lot more support in my opinion. I think these sorts of commitments, like friends of suai, are probably the best way we have of being of use. Other than to do the sorts of things like I'm trying to do which is to get the Dili Institute off the ground.

TIMORESE CULTURE

Patsy Thatcher

Traditional Timorese cultural, social, political organization and social practices

Timorese culture is not primarily an Asian culture. It has components from Melanesia, Southeast Asia, since the late 1500s Portuguese colonial culture and more recently some Indonesian cultural values and mores. The Portuguese and the Dutch both arrived to the island of Timor and fought each other for control of the island. West Timor became part of Indonesia when it gained independence in 1949. East Timor remained part of the Portuguese Colonial Empire until it was invaded by Indonesia in 1975. For 18 – 20 months prior to the Indonesian occupation Portuguese Timor was undergoing a decolonisation process with political power being fought out by basically two political parties, FRETILIN and UDT. Due to the political immaturity of their leaders and a serious dose of interference from Indonesia these two parties fought a brief civil war from late August 1975 to middle of September 1975. FRETILIN won and did a good job of administering the island, even when in October it had to fight armed incursions across its border with West Timor. Fearful that Indonesia intended to take it over and also disappointed that Portugal seemed to have abandoned them they declared themselves independent on November 28, 1975. As you know Indonesia invaded, illegally occupying the territory until 1999.

There is archeological, linguistic and cultural evidence that suggests that Timor was at one time a bridge between Asia and Melanesia and Asia and Australia. There is little hard evidence of contact between Australia and Timor before the 1890s, but both Timorese myths and Aboriginal myths suggest there was contact in the past. Carbon dating of recent archeological sites shows there was human settlement on Timor from at least 35,000 – 40,000 years ago. Some linguists, notably Dr. Geoffrey Hull, has suggested that the non - Austronesian language groups of Timor, the Bunak (Bobonaro), the Macassae (Baucau) and the Fataluka (Lospalos) are influenced by migrations from New Guinea some 4,000 years ago. Whereas the languages, for example, of the Tetum (Viqueque, Suai, Batugade, Balibo), Mambai (Ermera, Aileu, Same, Ainaro,) and Tokedede (Liquica, Maubara), are said to come from migrations from the southern part of Sulawesi as well as islands off that coast approximately 1100 years ago. Linguists maintain there are only 16 languages in Timor, however the Timorese claim a minimum of 28 languages, excluding Hakka (Chinese language), Portuguese and Bahasa Indonesia.

The Timorese have no maritime tradition. They did not develop boat building or navigational skills (their fishing boats for instance never lose sight of land). This has resulted in no emigration by Timorese until the Indonesian occupation. Rarely did Timorese have contact with outsiders or even neighbouring islands. The only history of them leaving the island was when they were taken as slaves to the Spice Islands where they were prized for their docility, industriousness and their unusual hand and finger dexterity (ideal for harvesting spices). Trading contacts with outsiders was conducted either by Timorese elites or the Timorese Chinese.

The impassable nature of the inner geographical boundaries, high razorback mountains and huge impassable rivers in the wet, led to the formation of so many different ethnolinguistic groups that lived for centuries in isolation from one another. This isolation was reinforced by strict kinship and marriage rules with traditional systems of exchange incorporated in **Barlaki** (ritual for arranging marriage that has an extremely important and practical function of distributing wealth). It has only been since the end of World War 2 that intermarriage and mixing between groups (other than at elite level) has taken place.

Within each of these societies groups of families (clans) were perceived and defined through their links to a particular ancestral origin 'House (**Uma**)'. A new House was formed when, usually for subsistence reasons, a group would separate off from their original House and set up another.

These Houses are hierarchical with the oldest having the most ritual authority and status, thus those individuals that belong to an older house are regarded as having traditional authority and status over others. This House is materialized in a physical structure with great social significance called an **Uma Lulik** (sacred house). All Timorese can tell you which Uma Lulik they belong to. The structure of the Uma Lulik is built in a certain way with the interior formation, the direction the house faces, the placing of the windows and doors, all expressing socio-cosmic ideas. Heirlooms and sacred items of the ancestors are kept in it. The oldest living representatives of the House guard them. This concept of House symbolizes origins, relatedness and obligations. It is responsible for the strict system of marriage rules, which has resulted in large extended marital alliance families with inflexible loyalty obligations.

Today culture both divides and unites local groups as they continue to draw on their cultural traditions both to assert distinctive local identities and at the same time to imagine themselves collectively as East Timorese. Prior to 1974 few people living in Timor would identify themselves as Timorese. They would initially identify as either Firaku (those who live east of Manatuto) or Kaladi (those who live west of Manatuto) and then identify with whatever their language group was e.g. Mambai, Makassae, Tetum etc. and then nominate their House affiliation.



Traditional Timorese administrative organisation

Traditional Timor was divided into a significant number of autonomous kingdoms, each consisting of several hierarchically classified Houses located in a specific area. A kingdom was a territory defined through ancestral land claims and headed by a political ruler known as the **Liurai**, who was advised by a council of elders (**Datu**). The Liurai was the equivalent of a King and his office was hereditary. These kingdom areas and the elite families who governed them continue to be recognized as such today. Every Timorese knows who their traditional Liurai is and who the members of his and the Datu's families are and it is those people that each community recognizes as having ritual and traditional authority.

As a generalization it is the **genealogical origin** of the person placed in authority that is important not the quality of their character or competence. Portuguese and Indonesians usually recognized this when appointing local and district government officials. **Falantil**, when setting up its clandestine structure, organized a consultation process with each local community. The political parties that emerged after the ballot more or less followed the same principles. Those who hold office usually come from a family recognized as having traditional ritual authority. Currently the situation remains much the same. For authority to be regarded as legitimate the carrier must have links to, or, come from the 'right' descent if they are to be obeyed. This traditional administrative structure, with its proven mechanisms for integrating foreign influence, is currently showing some signs of stress as Timor comes into contact with the modern world and a whole subset of new ideas and practices.

Social organisation

The central focal point of social organisation in both rural and urban areas is the extended family, the marital alliance systems that are forged through the ritual of Barlaki. One's kinship is an individual's alliance system. Loyalty is first given to one's immediate family and then to the extended

family and family alliance members. Unknown Timorese, or non kin are not necessarily trusted; they are perceived as having their own agenda and their loyalties lie elsewhere. Often the outsider is more readily received and trusted because they are seen as neutral and there is little danger they will be mixed up in internal intrigues.

Spiritual ties are considered more important than worldly ties. This applies as much to people who follow the animist, **Lulik**, traditions as it does to those practicing Catholicism. As a consequence godparents (Lulik also required people to have godparents) are vitally important people.

The emotional and spiritual ties to them are often usually stronger than the ties between a child and the natural parent. Godchildren are required to give their godparent the same degree of filial devotion etc as if they were their biological parent. Relationships between individuals with the same godparent are closer and more highly valued than ties between natural siblings. Unlike our understandings of kin, third and fourth cousins are often as important as first or second cousins.

Class divisions continue to be the predominate form of social division. In the main, society was, and especially in the rural areas remains, hierarchical and feudal. Elites are composed of Liurai and Datu families, senior Mestizo bureaucratic families from the current as well as both the Portuguese and Indonesian regime (usually branches of the same families), 'old money' families, members of the clergy and senior soldiers. The Middle class is composed of middle and lower level Mestizo or indigenous Timorese bureaucrats and landowners. The rest fall into the commoner class and are usually poor people, often landless. In the past the Chinese community, itself both hierarchical and authoritarian, constituted a group of their own who dominated business and entrepreneurship. Although the vast majority of the Timorese Chinese community now live in Australia their place appears to have been taken by Chinese coming into Timor from elsewhere and moving into the same business fields and the same class vacuum.

Given the multitude of political parties there are some social political divisions, but as a general rule people are not motivated by a particular political ideology to join a particular party, more by the loyalty constraints of their marital alliance network. There is some evidence this is changing, but it will take a second election to quantify this. There is also now a societal division between those recognised as being pro independence families versus pro autonomy/integration with Indonesian families.

Socialisation practices, or the way in which Timorese learn the way of life of their society, and understand and relate to the reality of their social environment, tell us a lot about how this society functions.

Children are raised so that they will fit well into their community both in terms of sociability and world view. Individualism is not prized. They are socialised so that throughout their lives they are responsible for the welfare of their parents. They must never do anything in public that could put a slur on the family name. Upholding family honour is paramount, it must be avenged if any real or perceived injury is done to the family or its reputation, or if the family has, for whatever reasons, incurred obligations to others. This is binding usually up to the fourth generation with most of the ethnolinguistic groups, although with the Tetum it is up to six.

Formality and respect govern most inter generational relations within the family. Generational conflict within families tends to be quite rare. Respect and obedience to all family members older than oneself is mandatory, the older the family member the greater the respect and obedience demanded.

Historically children were never abandoned in Timor, they were too valuable a resource, boys were a potential labor source and girls a potential wealth earner through the ritual exchange of gifts at marriage as the means of continuing the House. The extended family or godparents would always take responsibility for orphans. However, extended family systems have been so damaged over the last 28 years that there are not enough left to care for the number of orphans involved. There were no orphanages prior to the Indonesian invasion, now they are dotted all over the country.

Women are socialized to expect to marry and have children. Traditionally at hamlet and village level a woman's status, as well as that of her husband, often depended on the number of children she produced. Education is altering this pattern. At marriage, except for the matrilineal groups (Bunak and Tetum people), the woman usually became part of the husband's family who were obligated to take responsibility for her and her children on the death of her husband. The current situation is that 48% of married women in Timor are widows with 98% of them having children and the extended families simply cannot cope.

Within the family, girls are taught to be always subordinate to men, although often as wives and mothers they are extremely powerful in the domestic sphere. Females are a ward of and dependent on some man at all stages of their lives. Timorese women traditionally did not see this as a negative. Submissiveness by women is the norm and prized, with the man losing status with his peers if his wife is seen to be dominant. Education is making a difference to spouse relationships, noticeable in urban areas where relationships are much more egalitarian.

The woman's role is primarily child bearer, child rearer and child socialiser and she is also responsible for certain gender related activities such as harvesting rice and coffee, carrying water and all domestic activities; women carry by far the heavier work load. Traditionally they do not have a public face; the only roles they have outside the home are proscribed by custom. Again this is changing, especially in the urban areas where many women are demanding a voice in the political process.

Men are socialized to be directly responsible for the care and protection of their wives and children. Wife and child beating are both widespread and have always been accepted in communities; sadly these practices appear to be increasing, especially in urban areas. Husbands expect absolute fidelity from the wife, although the community condones infidelity by husbands. Polygamy was a common practice in the past, especially among elites.

Modesty, in all its forms, is seen as a virtue, particularly for women. Conformity in everyday activities is expected whether it be dress codes, gestures or language. It is usually unacceptable to put oneself in the limelight or to behave in an abrasive or pushy fashion.

Sociability is a virtue. People are expected to be gregarious, generous and hospitable. Guests, even unwelcome ones, must be received politely and fed. Traditionally it is not acceptable to badger, bully or harass others, nor to accept it. Neither should one confront another publicly, although these days the latter does happen and seems to be happening fairly frequently, whether this is a result of the democratisation process, or a way of channeling anger with the slowness of change, or unresolved issues that still have to go through the reconciliation process, remains to be seen. In general self-control is prized, displays of anger, or crying, or hysterics, indeed any uncontrolled behaviour (except that at funerals or during certain traditional rituals) is seen as a sign of weakness.

Humility is not particularly valued. One is expected to look another straight in the eye and stand one's ground when confronted with humiliation. You are expected to react to insult, either to oneself, one's family, or one's group.

Avoidance of loss of face (seen as an affront to family honour) is extremely important; strategies for preserving 'face' in conflict resolution situations are games played by all. Character assassination on the flimsiest of evidence is endemic and has developed into an exquisite art form. This is often referred to by Timorese themselves as the 'Timorese game'. As a generalisation Timorese are not excessively sensitive about their self - image. They are not thin skinned and are not usually easily insulted. They tolerate good natured teasing and joking even when it is on them and reciprocate readily, provided there is no marked age difference.

Like all colonised people the Timorese have become adept at telling their listeners what they think the listener wants to hear, particularly the foreigner. The Timorese way of handling requests they have no intention of honoring is to be charmingly acquiescent and polite, but do nothing. If tackled about their lack of response they will be vague, perhaps politely apologetic and exceedingly complimentary, but still do nothing.

Usually judgments about a person are not made on what that person says or does. They are made on the basis of who their families are, what status the family has in the community, their ethnic background and the political affiliation of the family.

REFLECTIONS OF WORKING AND LIVING IN EAST TIMOR

Lee Kirk

Where do I begin to explain some of my experiences of working in the town of Suai – East Timor? This is an honest account and I do not claim to know all the answers to the questions that I raise and points that I have made. I also admit that I have made assumptions along the way. I do believe though, that awareness is the first step to understanding and I hope that this article stimulates interesting discussions among the community of Port Phillip and friendship city relationships spread across Australia.



I was in Suai for the 1999 referendum and returned six months later to live in Suai town for a two year period. Currently I am employed by the City of Port Phillip to coordinate the friends of suai program, which means I am now based in Melbourne. When I arrived in East Timor I was 23 years old and thought I had a concept of war from readings and TV, nothing could prepare me for what I witnessed. The most vivid memory was the impact that fear had on the people of Suai and how it permeated every corner of the town and the life of the Timorese people. The intensity of fear was made visible by the faces, stories and actions of the Timorese. Today when I travel to East Timor I do not see fear on the faces of the people instead I hear the stories from everyone I meet of the 25 year war and realize the depth of healing that needs to take place at a personal and community level.

The most basic problem of working cross culturally is a lack of a common language. I immediately endeavored to learn the language to cross this first hurdle and though this was a positive step in the right direction it soon became obvious that this was not enough. I began to realize that though in theory we were using the same word to communicate, it dawned on me that each language uses words to articulate a life experience. My life and the life of the Timorese could not be any more different. Though I find it hard to give an example I can definitely say that this created misunderstandings on many levels. To truly master the language, and the life experience behind the language, would take many years of living in the community and understanding the historical and cultural background to the people of Suai. This, I assume, is also what the Timorese people experience when learning English.

One common historical occurrence that both Australia and East Timor have is colonisation, though in varying degrees and circumstances. The colonial baggage that both communities carry I found has an impact on the way that we communicate and endeavor to work together. My job was to pinpoint what the communities were most in need of, through talking with community members. It often surprised me how long it would take to discover what the community actually required. Any suggestions that I would contribute to the conversation were almost always put at the top of the list of things as most in need. I soon came to realize, through making friends in the community that this was due to the perception that if the community did not choose something that I thought was important that they would not receive anything at all and I would simply walk away. This, in the beginning was an easy pattern to fall into, as my awareness of the influence and impact that I had in decision making process was still low.

The impact that I had became apparent to me at the completion of a project. I on one hand, felt a sense of accomplishment but the community itself would not get as involved as I anticipated they would from their initial level of enthusiasm. Once again I had to reevaluate my perceptions and

realize that I really had little understanding of 'what the community needed' and a combination of my social structures and colonial history had influenced the way I was working with the people. The key to solving this problem, from personal experience, was to focus not on the project but on forming friendships and trust within the community and creating a situation where the community felt comfortable with me and each other to discuss problems they were facing and ultimately what they required to address these issues.

It would often take many months of visiting people, eating together, drinking coffee and spending nights in the community for me to begin to understand the basic needs of people and how the lifestyle of the Timorese impacts on the formation, creation and completion of projects. I have heard many foreigners working in East Timor complain about the laziness, incompetence and unreliability of the East Timorese. I can see how these foreigners whose main aim it is to complete the project with time, funding and resource restraints, can form this perception. The reality is that foreigners and Timorese both have very different priorities and lifestyles. The Timorese have a lifestyle that is inseparable from self-sufficient food production, childbearing and care, housework, animal maintenance and carrying of water for household duties, to name only a few which all contribute to the day to day workings of the household and community. The Timorese are also more susceptible to crisis more frequently due to poverty, health, housing, transport, weather and emotional issues arising from trauma which contribute to the reputation of unreliability. We need to understand this reality if we are to work with the Timorese community.

I think we need to learn to be humble, to stop looking to the powerful and outspoken for answers and realize that it is the powerless who hold the knowledge and the answers to these problems. Western power structures are built upon colonial founding principles of suppression, exploitation and the narrative of the hero adventurer so frequently found at the centre of our story telling traditions. We take our education, our tools, our technologically protected bodies and pay packets and we ask what do you need or want? What they want and need is what we have. Not our clothes, culture, smart cars or even our country, they need what all people need, the ability to look after ourselves. What we all need is a diverse and plentiful diet, security of housing, clean water, strength, and emotional stability so that our children have the strength and emotional capacity to learn and grow in a safe environment. This is a challenge to our humanity, our humility and our integrity, which has been formed through and by colonialist cultural practices.

The social and political structures of both communities differ and impact on the way that we work together. Within five minutes of being born my name was placed on a piece of paper and I was put through a system that affects the way that I function in my community, communicate with people and relate to the world. Though I was aware that this system affected my life I did not realize until I had lived in East Timor to what extent. I continually feel like I am removing layer after layer of my social conditioning in an attempt to work with the people of Suai. When I feel that I have made it to a level of understanding something else will happen and I have now come to the realisation that my culture has shaped me socially, politically and economically which will always influence the way I work and communicate with people.

The people of Suai also have social and political structures that shape the way that they communicate and relate to the world. I do not claim to understand their structures though through experience I have come to realize that blood lines and marriages are an extremely important part of the social, political and decision-making life of the East Timorese. (refer to Patsy Thatcher's article – Traditional Timorese Cultural, Social, Political Organization and Social Practices).

The point is that after four years of working with Suai, two of which were based in the town itself, I have a very basic understanding of Suai's social and political structures and still find it difficult to understand the implications at a local, district and country level in terms of politics and community based projects. It is at this point, particularly in terms of friendship city relationships, which a path needs to be found that both communities can relate to and feel comfortable to function in. This will not take a couple of weeks to work out. This will take years of trial and error by both communities involved. This I also feel is the base of creating a friendship that will last the journey of our commitment and keep both community structures in perspective and respect for both of our cultural heritages.



The effects of war on communities have been documented time and again but I still feel it is vital that we also keep this in perspective while working with communities in East Timor. While I was working in the Covalima District I was continually astounded at the amount of conflict that would arise when working on community based projects at both a personal and community level. Once again the lesson learned for me was that often the projects are not as important as the process of creating a situation where the community could work together to rebuild their own community. This is in terms of both the community untimely knowing what is needed but also in terms of creating an environment where relationships that had been strained due to war have a chance to go through a healing process.

War does not create an environment of trust and community. Often this is the very thing that war endeavours to destroy so as to gain total control of the people. I do not want to create a picture of a disunited, untrusting community of East Timor but I do believe that war has put a strain on these relationships at a local, district and country level.

Friendship city relationships need to keep this in perspective when doing community activities. I believe due to our colonial heritage, we here in Australia have a feeling of completion when the building is finished and money has been spent in the community. All too often, this has the potential to create further rifts in community relationship, if the time is not taken to ensure that all factions and community members have a chance to express their opinion and contribute to the process of creating the projects. Ultimately having 100% input and participation into the direction, structure and aims of the project, results in the community having the chance to work together and begin a healing process at a grass roots level. The process of building strong community foundations should come from the bottom up as opposed to the top down, which I believe will create sustainable situations.

If the project fails but you manage to create an atmosphere where the community has worked together to resolve issues and problems, then you have succeeded in terms of long term ability for the community to rebuild their own lives. This also creates a situation where we here in Australia have a chance to redefine our success and failures. We do not succeed purely by helping to rebuild a building or fundraising money and items that we donate to the community. This is a chance for both communities to experiment and to deepen our understanding of each other through this experience. We have something very different to offer because we are not aid agencies, we are all learning how to form friendships and help cross borders and cultures in an entirely new way. It is not surprising that we are finding it difficult.

Perhaps we should be looking to the Timorese community in Melbourne more. Many Timorese families have been here for over 20 years. The parents know the traditional and colonising cultures to some degree and the children know what it is like to be Timorese and Australian. The Timorese people in this community have been trying to understand their new role in relation to the future of East Timor since 1999. It might be mutually beneficial to explore this avenue. Perhaps we should also engage in dialogue with pertinent people from the Aboriginal community. After all, people in Australia have been attempting to assist and rehabilitate aboriginal communities destroyed by colonialism. There are many Aboriginal people in Australia who have experience in community development and who are articulate on these subjects.

Perhaps we also need to be studying the notion of friendship, and what it means to engage in a friendship. Certainly it means exchange of stories and continuity, shared experience and so on. Is this what we are nurturing? One question that leads to some interesting ideas is, how do we provide continuity and sustainable friendship models? Perhaps we should be looking to members of the community who have genuinely formed friendship with Timorese people over long periods? There are people in the community who appear to be developing successful models of help outside of the aid and NGO models. All these issues need to be more thoroughly explored so that we can redefine our success and failures.

I would like to send a special thank you to Jen Hughes for her contribution to this paper.

Please also refer to - Nee M 1996 *'towards restoring life'* Overseas Service Bureau, Melbourne, Vic
His work has helped me to articulate and reflect on my experience of working in East Timor.

SALELE PRE SCHOOL PROJECT – THE ROTARY PERSPECTIVE

Graham Lockwood

Early in the 1999/2000 rotary year the president of the Rotary Club of Melbourne South, Graham Lockwood proposed to the club's board that a suitable project be found to assist the people of East Timor in some way. This proposal was agreed in principle and after discussion with City of Port Phillip officers, David Graham and David Yeouart a suitable project in Suai, East Timor was identified. Suai had already been adopted by the City of Port Phillip as its friendship city in East Timor.



The project involved refurbishing a suitable building in the village of Salele, in the town of Suai, as a pre school in partnership with City of Port Phillip.

The Rotary Club of Melbourne South commenced in 1952 and currently has some 55 members drawn from local and surrounding businesses and residents. Apart from international projects it is involved in a wide range of community, vocational and youth projects in the South Melbourne area

The cost of the project to refurbish the building, provide education for approximately 100 children, supply educational equipment and creative toys and recreational equipment was assessed at \$AUD 40,000.

It was agreed that the City of Port Phillip through the Rotary Club of South Melbourne would contribute \$US 13,900 to the project and that the club would apply to the Rotary Foundation of Rotary International for a \$US 6,950 "Helping Grant".

The Rotary Foundation, began in 1917, has a mandate to support the efforts of rotary clubs throughout the world to achieve world understanding and peace through international humanitarian, educational and cultural exchange programs. One such program is "Helping Grants". This grant is available for projects in non rotary countries with the proviso that the local rotary club assumes full leadership and responsibility for the project.

Suai is on the south coast of East Timor on the boarder with West Timor. The ongoing subversive activity in the area, the political situation in the country following independence, the ongoing cultural differences and illnesses of volunteers to manage the project on the ground, has meant that the project has not yet got underway. It is hoped however that the project will be able to be commenced in the near future with completion before the end of the year.

A member of the Rotary Club of Melbourne South, Graham Lockwood serves on the City of Port Phillip's, Friends of suai committee and the club is a donor to the organisation.

A PRE SCHOOL FOR SALELE

Berenice Nyland

A pre school was one of the early projects identified by the CSG as a worthwhile pursuit. However, what at first seemed a straightforward initiative has proved to be enormously complex. The pre school is an example of some of the lessons that have confronted the Port Phillip group in its efforts to establish a friendship relationship with Suai. It has highlighted concerns about the difference between the aid NGOs and the council's relationship with Suai, which should be based on inter community activity. There have also been many discussions about projects and sustainability.

Where did the proposal originate? When members of the first Suai community group visited Port Phillip in July 2000 there was no mention of a pre school. By the time Cr Julian Hill, Tracy Curro and Anne Dunn returned from their trip to Suai, in September 2000, a pre school was firmly on the agenda. There were photographs of buildings that had been identified by the UN as suitable for refurbishment, Anne Dunn was mentioned in despatches as pacing out the size of the buildings and Cr Julian Hill and Tracy Curro mentioned a need for pre school services in subsequent interviews. In consultation with City of Port Phillip officers, David Graham and David Yeouart the pre school was chosen as a suitable project for the Melbourne South Rotary Club to seek funds. The Rotary application for funding states the request for a pre school came from the local community. It is more likely the suggestion came from the UN. This lack of certainty led to difficulties.

With the UN presence diminishing it was necessary to try to renegotiate use of the buildings. We have now been offered a different building. The emphasis on refurbishment has come from the Rotary approach to aid. Projects are identified, carried out and on completion Rotary withdraws. These terms were well understood by the CSG but an ongoing conversation has centred around the following questions. Does the CSG have the same approach as Rotary? What are our responsibilities for helping turn a building into a sustainable early childhood service? Do we need to take up where Rotary leaves off and look at the issues of what is the most needed and relevant early childhood service for this area? Where will staff come from?

The fledgling government has said it is committed to education at all levels but does not have the resources to provide pre school education as primary and secondary education must take precedence. The people of Salele cannot pay fees, the teachers cannot work without wages and the idea of employing teachers has been suggested and vehemently opposed by some members of the CSG.

Another problem has been lack of expertise. The first AVI officer working for Port Phillip in Suai was asked to investigate the pre school project and report to the council. With no support and only his own personal experience to base decisions upon a list of equipment was submitted to the council. An International Rotary "helping hand" grant has been attained to buy equipment. The list was not directed towards the pre school age and would have resulted in a poorly equipped primary classroom if it had been acted upon.

This in turn evokes the question of what is pre school? As ideas of child development become more contextualised, that is children are seen in their own cultural, historical and political settings, the idea of a one size fits all pre school program has been questioned. In Suai there are issues of parental trauma, nutritional practices, drought and poverty that help make up the context of children's lives. Early childhood services need to be relevant and directed towards improving the quality of children's lives and providing better life opportunities.

There have been some cautionary tales from other countries who have tried to set up pre schools in East Timor. One New Zealand volunteer was contracted to create, train and co-ordinate the formation of three schools in Suai, Zumalai and Selele. The contract was for one year which makes the contracted task herculean. Programs were quickly started but with no funding the teachers have had to leave. This has been a frustrating task for all involved. There is a need to look closely at these issues as the friendship city project is trying to think in long term, cross cultural, relationship terms. We do need to challenge ourselves about the sustainability of programs, the quality of programs, the relevance, our own expertise and the expertise of the East Timorese. It is within this type of context that proposals like pre schools should be explored. If we think beyond present aid models I am convinced that projects like pre schools can become important links between our communities.

THOUGHTS ON READING THIS TEXT FROM A CSG MEMBER

Chris Nyland

"Suck it and see" is the way that former Mayor, Cr Julian Hill describes the way we went about establishing the friendship relationship with the people of Suai. This is a valid assessment and highlights a weakness that was identified at the time we began but was never accorded sufficient significance to warrant the provision of resources. The weakness to which I refer was not that we were a group of individuals living in a modern industrial society with no experience at building the type of relationship proposed. Rather, it was that we were so confident in our own abilities we refused to recognise that we needed to apportion some serious time, effort and finances to identifying what others who had travelled a similar road might tell us about what works, what does not, what we should avoid and what we should embrace.

Part of the reason why we adopted this position was a lack of modesty but it was also partly fear that if we were to allocate scarce resources to exploring what others may have discovered there would be less available to give directly to the people of Suai. In retrospect, it must be concluded this was a sad error. For it is highly likely that as a consequence of this decision we wasted a great deal more than we would have needed to outlay on seeking to learn from those who have gone before us. Hopefully, this text will not only help us to assess our own successes and failures but will also help others by providing them with some of the insights we needed when we began our effort to build a friendship relationship in 2000.

Having read the various contributions to this booklet, it becomes clear there are and always has been very different understandings of what a friendship city relationship means. This is inevitable and the more so given there has been a steady flow of people on to the committee over time. In retrospect I recognise that this diversity is a strength but it has meant that we have had to constantly reiterate to ourselves and make clear to new committee members exactly what it is we are about. This clarity, we have discovered, needs to extend to an explicit understanding of what we have managed to achieve, what is expected of those who become members of the committee, what are our aims for the immediate and long term, what is the relationship between the committee and the council, and what resources are controlled by each of these agents.

A problem, the significance of which took us a long time to appreciate but which is raised repeatedly in the contributions, relates to staffing. This has proven a difficulty for two primary reasons. First, we had not appreciated the extent to which it would be necessary to provide an income to at least some of those who have worked with us in Suai. Reflecting our awareness of the fact that we live in a society in which people who give over a very significant part of their time to the community generally need to be paid a wage, we readily and correctly employed an individual to work on the friendship relationship in Port Phillip. However, we failed to fully appreciate that a similar situation exists in a subsistence economy, that is, if people dedicate a significant part of their time and effort to such tasks as teaching computer skills to the members of their community they do so at a cost which they often cannot afford to sustain over any significant length of time. What this means is that while for some tasks it is possible and desirable to rely on volunteers, for many others this is not an appropriate solution. In short, relying on unpaid volunteers to undertake tasks that are necessarily of a long duration is highly problematic.



The references in the papers to the pre-school and other forms of education highlight this difficulty and in so doing cast light on a related issue. This is the fact that when we in Melbourne take on a specific task in Suai we have to understand that it is critical that we think about what long-term costs are involved and what is needed or can be done to meet these costs. The reality is that some activities can be thought of as tasks that are one-offs such as the refurbishment of the kindergarten. But what we have to recognise, and it took some time to appreciate this fact, is that if we build a kindergarten we will need to employ appropriate staff and these individuals will need to receive a wage. In short, what appeared a short term task proved to involve a long term commitment.

The second staffing problem relates to the Australian volunteers that we recognised needed to live in Suai if the friendship was to grow. Here we have discovered that there are serious problems involved in asking people to remain for the length of time needed to cement a friendship. Moreover, we found that this was a difficulty that is greatly compounded by the health risks faced by people who have not been prepared by their conditioning in Australia. Given the gravity of these problems it is wise to give very serious consideration to the question of staffing and think about other possibilities than sending Australians. A more suitable approach, for example, might be to employ a trained Timorese as one's representative with this individual being expected to report periodically to both the local committee and to a relevant agent within the government in Dili. The latter part of this approach will become easier as the administration in the capital becomes further consolidated.

One positive development that has proven less of a problem than might have been expected is the committee's capacity to sustain interest and enthusiasm within Port Phillip. With one international crisis following another with depressing frequency there was always the danger the desperate state of the people of Timor would fade from interest if not memory with the passage of time. This does not appear to have happened and while there has been turnover on the CSG the committee has remained viable and retains a sound base amongst the citizens of Port Phillip. In short, we have found that enthusiasm can be sustained for the long haul.

In conclusion my reading of the contributions made me aware of how little I know of the history and culture of the people of East Timor. After two years on the committee this is a shameful admission. I thank the contributors who have offered their insights into the nature of the people of this new nation and of the people of Suai. And I thank the people of Suai who have allowed me to attempt to become a friend.