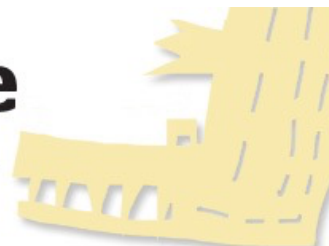




# Australia Timor-Leste Advancement Society



## Visit to Timor-Leste

### Seeing the reality

**Gerald Kenneally and Greg Mills** of the Board of ATLAS recently travelled to Timor-Leste to advance ATLAS's projects. They were ably assisted in their trip by **Maria dos Santos**, ATLAS's staff member in Timor. Gratitude to the Carmelite Sisters was expressed for their assistance in providing office space for Maria.

The team visited the **Timor Learning Centre** which benefits from ATLAS's payment of the wage of teacher. The centre has a number of projects including sewing initiatives and a well-attended gym.

While ATLAS had repaired certain areas at the **Bidau** Orphanage damaged in the floods in 2022 further assistance is needed to repair the roof of a shelter used for a number of activities.

The visit to **Maubara** Orphanage began with a wonderful welcoming song and dance performed by some of the children. Then the ATLAS representatives bestowed on three students their scholarship awards to cover their secondary education.

A tour of the premises included the kitchen and storage rooms that ATLAS funded, followed by a visit to the kindergarten across the street and then on to the clinic and sewing room that the Sisters conduct. Later, it was great to see the development in the school at **Hera** on the other side of Dili and to hear of the plans for the future there.

Fr. Guilhermino da Silva welcomed the visitors to the Catholic University in **Dili**. With over 1000 students, it has four faculties covering Health, Language, Agriculture and Social & Arts. Business schools operate in each of the faculties including medicine, nursing and pharmacy, English, veterinary, business and accounting, history and geography. It was apparent that the University library is in dire need of books.



*Gerald and Greg with the Sisters of Paul de Chartres at Kuluhun*



*Fr Guil, Gerald, Maria, a Library Assistant and Greg in the University Library*

## Some of the ATLAS Projects in Timor-Leste

### Hera

A Dominican Primary School is in the poor rural area of Hera. The school Principal has expressed deep gratitude for past years of generous support and has advised that the school is now able to sustain its mission without calling on ATLAS to fund teachers.

The school has a bread kitchen which was supported by ATLAS through the provision of a large oven. The community benefits from access to wholesome fresh bread daily. This project also provides a livelihood for the women who make the bread. They are well on the way to creating a sustainable small business.



*Bread-making facilities at Hera*

### Maubara

ATLAS is concerned that 42% of the population of Timor-Leste still lives below the poverty line and that 40% of young people in rural districts are unable to read. St Therese's orphanage at Maubara provides a home for children from rural areas which is safe, where they are cared for with love and respect, and where they receive a good education.

ATLAS is proud to be associated with the Carmelite Sisters at Maubara who have such a commitment to the future of the nation and who are upgrading their own qualifications as teachers.

### Fatuhada

**Only around 35% of Timorese women have the chance to continue their education past primary school.**

Most of the girls living with the Sisters at Fatuhada come from impoverished backgrounds. Since 2016, forty-seven young women have been given the opportunity by ATLAS for secondary education, including nine students in 2021 and six students during 2022.

The students live in dormitory accommodation in the grounds of the Carmelite Convent and attend either General Secondary Schools (GSE) which prepare students for tertiary studies; or Technical/Vocational Education Schools (STVE) which prepare students for administration, tourism, and hospitality careers.

Girls from St Therese's Orphanage, Maubara who are willing and able to continue their studies at the secondary level will continue to be assisted by ATLAS. In July 2021 ATLAS decided to introduce a system of scholarships. Organisation of the program is underway. It is a great contribution to help Timorese people build their families, their community and their nation. None of this could be done without the support of ATLAS's generous donors. **Thank you all.**



*Sewing facilities at Maubara*

## BREAKING NEWS

In future, girls at St Therese's wishing to pursue senior academic studies will study at a government high school in Maubara. The government requires students to attend schools in the local area. Girls taking Vocational Courses will still need to live at Fatuhada.

## Non-Trivial Trivia

### A wonderful time was had by all

A splendid afternoon was had at Dooleys Regents Park Sports Club on 19 February.

Instead of the usual “Timor Time” we had a Trivia afternoon hosted by Murray Mackay, well known [Trivia host](#). The place was packed with participants, some who have attended the normal Timor Time, some who enjoy Murray’s trivialities, and others who know how important it is to support ATLAS and its work with the Timor people. Lovely food was available from the Club’s Bistro. Donations and some fine raffles made the event a financial success for ATLAS.

The date of the event was significant – 19 February. That was the day in 1942 when the Japanese invaded Portuguese Timor, drawn there by the presence of Australian soldiers who had arrived on the previous 17 December. Among the Australians was Paddy Kenneally, father of Gerald, ATLAS’s Chairman. Gerald spoke of his father’s never-ending support of the Timorese whose support saved the lives of many Australians in those dark days of World War II. Susan Connelly RSJ also spoke of the Timor Campaign and provided a leaflet of information for people to take home. Josephine Mitchell RSJ spoke of ATLAS’s work in Timor, particularly the education of girls and its importance to the future of the new nation of Timor-Leste.

**“Timor Trivia Time” for 2023 will be held at the same venue, Dooleys Regents Park Sports Club on Sunday, 22 October 2023. The traditional “Timor Time” will return at the newly refurbished Lidcombe Dooleys in 2024.**

## ATLAS Report

The Annual Report for ATLAS is available on our website, as well as other information:

<https://www.atlaseasttimor.com.au/>

Reports of ATLAS’s various activities are found there, together with the financial report for 2021-2022. The COVID restrictions hit ATLAS badly but we are grateful for the continued support of our wonderful donors.

Click here for the [Annual Report](#) which gives details of our Programs of Assistance.

## ATLAS Board

### A new Board Member – Noreen Nicoara

ATLAS supporters will surely join with the committee members and directors to congratulate Noreen Nicoara as she takes up her position as a Director of ATLAS, along with Gerald Kenneally (Chair), Greg Mills (Secretary) and Paul McGrath (Treasurer).



Noreen has been a stalwart support in her role as minutes secretary and general administrator. Thank you, Noreen, for your ever-willing work and cooperation, and for your constant support for Australia’s Timorese friends.

### Father Graham McIntyre



It is with regret that we farewell Father Graham McIntyre as a Board member of ATLAS.

Graham has served ATLAS from its inception, one of the many actions he undertook in support of the Timorese people.

He’s been a tower of strength, commonsense, perception, hard work and spiritual companionship. We know his interest in the Timorese

people will not flag, and we wish him good health as he steps away from this particular ministry.

## Fundraising

The regular fundraising stalls at Our Lady of the Rosary Church St Marys (near Penrith) continued last year although COVID and lockdowns have wreaked havoc and depleted the coffers. Even so, two stalls were held – a tribute to the organisers.

Plans are underway for three stalls this year. Rayella Haines and Josephine Mitchell are the drivers behind this fundraising effort, ably assisted by a few friends and helpers. Special thanks to Fr Brendan Murphy for his support.

**“A country born on an empty stomach: War and hunger in Timor-Leste”**

An article from 2021 is a real wake-up call to Australians. Klas Lundström [writes](#) in the *South East Asia Globe* that “*Timor-Leste was born in the wake of colonialism, war and hunger, with the multi-generational effects of nearly 25 years of Indonesian occupation still visible. Malnutrition and stunting remain widespread as the country's youth attempt to scratch out a future amidst trauma that lingers in the very soil.*”

“According to UNICEF, an estimated [47% of Timor-Leste’s children](#) under the age of five were identified with stunted growth as a result of malnutrition in 2020. The Global Hunger Index ranks Timor-Leste [second-to-last](#) in its 2020 ranking of states regarding access to food. This places Timor-Leste at 106 out of 107 on the index, only surpassing the African state of Chad in addressing child undernourishment, wasting, stunting and mortality.”

After summarising the desperate Timorese history Lundström writes: “foreign aid and assistance, while a hallmark of the national food system since the end of the war, is not a long-term solution. Self-sufficiency is the key factor...” The author refers frequently in the article to the poor state of Timorese soil, a thin layer on the rock-like island.



Additionally, the Timorese people remain scarred by trauma. Over the past 500 years the Timorese have survived colonisation, invasions, foreign occupations, mass killings, major wars, and still they battle hunger. It’s a population with major incidences of PTSD not only in individuals, but throughout families, especially in rural areas.

**Let us renew our efforts to support our Timorese friends.**

**Donation Form**

C/- Kenneally’s Funerals Pty Ltd, 13 Chamberlain St Campbelltown NSW 2560

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