

Indigo Atauro Friendship Committee

Annual Report & Friends of Atauro newsletter

December 2019

In August and September of 2019 it was both pleasing and at times disappointing, to see Timor Leste in the news.

The celebration of 20 years since the vote for independence, the visit of the Australian Prime Minister and the public declaration of AusAid initiatives in Timor Leste were all given prominent coverage in the mainstream media.

However, the on-going prosecution of Witness K and his lawyer Bernard Collaery by the Australian Government, for their role in exposing the Australian Government's behaviour during the Timor Sea negotiations, is the down side.

The publicity reflects an appropriate level of interest in developing a high level relationship with one of our nearest neighbours in Timor Leste. A strong relationship with Timor Leste and Atauro Island in particular is something the people of Indigo Shire through the Friendship committee and Friends of Atauro have been advocating for some time. Specific projects allow the citizens of Indigo to be part of the lives of the people of Atauro. The on-going nature of many of these the programs means the relationship is growing and sustainable.

Update on Projects

Student Scholarships: The friendship community currently supports 7 students with tertiary scholarships and living allowances to study in Dili. Congratulations to Charles Vito Xavier Soares who recently graduated in Information Technology. Our first vocational student Herminia da Costa Soares (she is studying hospitality) was recently selected for a Work in Australia program by Tibar Vocational College.

We have 2 new students in 2019. Crizanio Freitas Soares who is studying agriculture /animal health at the National University and Ratna Reliana de Araujo who is doing nursing at the Kristal Institute. As of yet these two students do not have a direct Indigo sponsor. If you are interested in fully /partly sponsoring a student please contact Jess Johnston at the Shire Office or committee member Libby Hosking. Sponsorship donations are fully tax deductible.

Composting Toilets: Currently it is the dry season in Atauro and this is the ideal time to construct new composting toilets. Our facilitator on Atauro has plans for 5 toilets to be built, proposing 3 at Fatu'u in the North part of Atauro and 2 at Macadade in central Atauro. Thanks to the Kiewa/Tangambalanga Lions Club, Indigo Shire Youth Ambassadors and Conundrum Holdings who are sponsoring the construction of these toilets.

Indigo Youth Ambassadors: At the end of 2018 the Indigo Youth Ambassadors and their respective Primary Schools donated \$2600 towards projects sponsored by the Indigo Atauro Friendship Committee. The commitment by the young people of Indigo Shire to support the communities of Atauro Island is fantastic.

So far the funds have been used to supply a pump and hoses to the school garden in Bequeli, provide new equipment for the maternity clinics at Anaratuto, Adara and Berao, and to construct a composting toilet.

The school garden at Bequeli was rated one of the best in East Timor by a recent evaluation team from Permatil. It is great that Indigo students can be part of such a project. The new equipment at the clinics mean women and their babies do not have to walk many kilometres to receive basic care. Well done to the Youth Ambassadors and the Rutherglen Cyclists who supported this initiative.

Incorporation Process

The transition from a Council Section 86 Committee to an independent incorporated community organisation has been completed. AS part of that, we now have a documented purpose (in line with the Model Rules provided by Consumer Affairs Victoria).

The new name is the "Indigo Shire Atauro Island Friendship Incorporated"

The Purposes of the Association are:

- To collaborate with the people of Atauro Island to:
 - Identify and prioritise the needs of the communities on the island
 - Support the leaders of the communities in developing skills in governance and economic management of the Timorese National Program of Community Empowerment (PROGRAMA NASIONAL DEZENVOLVIMENTU SUKU)
 - Develop collaboratively with community leaders long term and short term goals for the areas of health, education and economic development that will advance the self-sufficiency of Atauro's communities.
 - Strengthen the communities of Atauro Island with initiatives consistent with principles of environmental, social and cultural sustainability.
- To liaise with the communities of Indigo Shire to build awareness and understanding of the culture, values and development needs of our friends on Atauro.
- To support Indigo communities in raising funds for the projects and initiatives identified by the people of Atauro.
- To provide accurate, timely information to the Indigo Shire Council about matters related to Atauro Island with recommendations for Shire support of identified projects.

At the same time, we secured and signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Indigo Shire. This agreement details the responsibilities (and actions) of both our committee and the shire.

A third and final piece of work to be completed, is transferring the support of the current Friends of Atauro into membership of the Indigo Shire Atauro Island Friendship Inc.

This will be by simply completing an online /written membership form and returning it to the membership secretary. These forms will be distributed in the near future and if you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact a committee member.

Communications

We are currently trying to improve the flow of information between all those involved in the Friendship relationship. At the moment we rely on newsletters and specific email contact. We are trying to broaden that by using facebook (Indigo/Atauro Friendship), the Indigo Shire website and eventually our own independent website.

An afternoon tea was conducted in Beechworth on Sunday 17th November, where a small gathering was held to thank those who attended (and also those unable to attend) for their involvement and commitment. Whilst this was a first and could always be enhanced, we shall look at a similar event for next year. If you have any ideas please us know.

As we await finalisation of our webpage, please contact our secretary Libby Hosking (libbyho55@gmail.com) or any of the committee that you know.

Finances

As of 30th November 2019, the friendship committee has a bank balance of \$19,117.00.

The reduced number of scholarship holders and a steady donation/sponsorship income sees the committee in a sound financial position.

Donors to the Scholarship program are reminded that their donations are fully tax deductible .A receipt from the Alola Foundation is available. Contact the treasurer Irene Cracknell (icrackne@bigpond.net.au) if you need more information.

Thank You

Once again thanks to all the Friends of Atauro for their on-going support .A special thanks to the Indigo Youth Ambassadors, their schools and program co-ordinators Sal Kimber and Jess Johnston. The transition to an incorporated association was made possible due to work of council officers Greg Pinkerton, Jess Johnston and CEO, Trevor Ierino.

To all the committee members thanks again for your contributions and I look forward to a productive 2020.

Mark Verbaken

(Chair Indigo Shire Atauro Island Friendship Committee)

Timor Sea Saga



Above is an extract from a series of cartoons titled The Timor Sea Saga. They are produced by the Timor Sea Justice Forum. The contact is Sister Susan Connelly susan.connelly@sosj.org.au if you are interested in finding out more about the Timor Sea saga and the prosecution of Witness K and Bernard Collaery.

Photo Gallery



Charles Graduation Celebration



Herminia da Costa Soares



2019 Students: Left - Crizanio Freitas Soares. Right - Ratna Reliana de Araujo



Above: Youth ambassador supported projects: Left – New pump providing water from well in Bequeli.
Right – Blood pressure equipment for clinics
Below: 2018 Youth Ambassadors

