

### 3.5 Delegation to Lospalos, Timor Leste Report

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Authorised By	Director – Sustainable Communities
File No.	A4895538
Attachment(s)	YES

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#### PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to inform Council of the outcomes of the Tour De Amizade – Friendship Tour of Timor Leste and visit to Lospalos undertaken from 21 August to 3 September, 2013. A total of 14 people from the general community and members of the Mornington Peninsula Friends of Lospalos Committee, two Councillors and several staff members participated in this unique event.

#### BACKGROUND

On 11 June, 2013, Council approved the attendance of Cr. Tim Rogers, Ms. Linda Wimetal, Community Liaison Officer, Mr. Geoff Carson, Manager – Libraries Arts and Culture, and Ms. Jenny Macaffer, Coordinator – Social Planning and Community Development (the latter two self funded) to participate in the Friendship Tour (Tour de Amizade). Cr. Graham Pittock also attended as a self funded participant.

Mornington Peninsula Shire has a well established Friendship City relationship with the sub-district of Lospalos, Lautem district in Timor Leste, supported by the people of Mornington Peninsula through the Friends of Lospalos Committee. The friendship was established in May 2000 and is a Section 86 Committee of Council, with the current Chair being Cr. Tim Rodgers and substitute representative Cr. Graham Pittock.

The main purpose of the visit was to strengthen the links of friendship, provide a cultural awareness experience for donors and supporters, gain new insights and ideas to help guide the friendship groups future activities and to consult with the leadership of Lospalos about the strategic opportunities which are anticipated to come from the development of decentralisation and creation of municipalities in Timor Leste.

#### DISCUSSION

Some key outcomes are highlighted here, with further details provided in the attachments to this report:

- A meeting in Dili was held with the Minister for State Administration and Territorial Management, Minister Jorge Teme. Minister Teme provided a briefing on the development of Local Government and some of the key issues hampering this development i.e. capacity building and human resource development. A staff member in his department has now been appointed to assist friendship groups with advice and support during visits to the districts and as a key point of contact. This new appointment highlights the importance the Ministry places on fostering people to people relationships through the Australia-Timor Leste friendship groups;

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- Friends of Lospalos sponsor a group of eight Lospalos students to achieve their Primary School Teaching Degree through a partnership with the Baucau Teachers College located in Baucau and run by the Marist Brothers. A meeting with the students and a special ‘welcome dinner’ was arranged, a very emotional and moving experience for the group and for the students to meet those responsible for their support;
- The tour group was privileged to be taken on a day tour of Nino Konis National Park, the only designated National Park in Timor Leste and much of this park is located in our friendship sub-district. The group was accompanied by the Sub-District Administrators of both Lospalos and Tutuala, the Regional Director of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries and six National Park rangers (Forestry Guardia). The tour included significant cultural awareness through the talks given by the Director of the folklore of the local area, sacred sites and the natural environment. We discussed potential support for the rangers (National Park Guards) through our connections with the Australian organisation The Thin Green Line and the International Rangers Federation. Connections are currently being established to enable relevant supplies and equipment to be shipped to Lospalos to assist the rangers (boots, clothing, tools, mosquito nets etc.) and we are currently investigating opportunities for links into training with Australian rangers;
- The Lospalos Friendship Commission is a group of key community leaders who provide the organisational structure and local expertise to the friendship relationship and oversee its activities. The Commission is led by the Sub-District Administrator, Sr. Domingos dos Santos Sequeira. The Commission meeting was well attended and included a cultural welcome and presentation of traditional tais (woven ceremonial cloth) to the Friends of Lospalos members;
- A further meeting was held where both the Friends of Lospalos and the Friendship Commission assessed community proposals for funding and held discussions on the employment of a local liaison position to be based in the office of the Sub District Administrator. An agreement was signed and position description finalised with salary and terms of employment, recruitment timeline and process agreed to. This position will be funded by Friends of Lospalos. The employer will be the office of the Sub District Administration. The outcomes of the meetings were enhanced by the capacity of the volunteer interpreter/translator who contributed greatly to ensuring full understanding was obtained;
- A special highlight for the group was the opportunity for community engagement activities. These included several educational, musical and cultural events;
- A cultural workshop with the organisation Many Hands International, who invited the group to a presentation on some of their cultural and community development activities including a performance of traditional dancing, a video of the Fataluku Language Research Project, a traditional lunch and visit to the partially completed renovation of the old market building into a modern Cultural Community Centre;
- Harmonica workshops: two harmonica workshops were held with the Lospalos Red Cross Youth Group. Approximately 18 young people attended the workshops where they each received a harmonica and tuition over two sessions (with the assistance of a local interpreter). Information and resources have been provided to enable continued lessons with the group. Approximately 40 harmonicas were also donated to the local school to include in their music program. The harmonicas were made available through the generous donations of people on the Mornington Peninsula, with support from Nepean Music and local radio station 3RPP;

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- Lospalos Community Radio Station: a visit was made to the local community radio station which included an interview that will form part of a radio program to air on 3RRP on the Mornington Peninsula next year. The interview included information about operations, programming, and challenges and identified areas of need. These included training and human resources, equipment and transport. The Lospalos radio station provides a vital form of communication across the region reaching a radius of 100 kilometres and is available to more than 80% of the population in that area. 3RRP will also use music from a local Lospalos band, Klamar, in their special program and interview some of the participants in the Tour De Amizade – Friendship Tour of Timor Leste;
- Library visits: on Thursday 22 August, the group travelled to the Ermera district to visit the Ermera public library service at Gleno, and to meet with the librarian and staff and assess the feasibility of replicating the library model to the Lospalos district. The library is unique in Timor Leste, providing an impressive range of traditional public library services such as the free lending of books and other material in a range of languages, children’s story time programs, classes in language learning and also a book distribution service across the district to family groups and villages. As part of the Friends of Lospalos future Strategic Plan, it is envisaged that a visit to the Gleno library will be arranged for the Lospalos Commission in order to raise understanding of the potential of a library service for Lospalos;
- Art Purchase: during a visit to the Arte Moris Free Art School in Dili, members of the group viewed an outstanding work of art depicting the struggle of the Timorese under the years of Indonesian occupation by Lospalos artist Cesario Lourdes titled ‘Laiha Fatin atu Subar’ (No Place To Hide). The work was subsequently purchased by Cr. Pittock and Cr. Rodgers on behalf of the Shire, and has been since added to the Mornington Peninsula Regional Gallery (MPRG) collection. It is currently being framed and will be placed on exhibition in Shire buildings in the near future. The painting will complement the MPRG’s Human Rights Art Collection;
- New connections and partnerships were made with individuals and organisations such as National Park Rangers, Many Hands International, Red Cross Lospalos, Lospalos Hospital, Lospalos Community Radio, local Lospalos band Klamar and the Ermera library service; and
- International Human Rights Day on the Mornington Peninsula (10 December, 2013) was dedicated to celebrating our friendship with Timor Leste with a presentation of artwork purchased from a local Lospalos artist, stories from Timor and Timorese music.

### FUTURE DIRECTIONS

Friend of Lospalos will utilise the knowledge obtained from the visit to contribute to the development of long term Strategic Plan aimed at strengthening relationships, focussing on areas of development where we have some expertise, continue discussions and exploring the potential to assist in library development and literacy programs and links to other supports and organisations where appropriate. The Strategic Plan will then be presented to Council.

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This is the first time that Friends of Lospalos, with some support of Council, has undertaken an activity as ambitious as this one. The travel and road conditions were challenging and exhausting and the group was large, requiring complex and sometimes sensitive management. The availability of basic services i.e. banking and telecommunication was limited which caused difficulties for accessing funds to pay for accommodation and to ensure each person had a working phone connection. The current infrastructure for tourism in the districts is of a low standard yet the untouched nature of the environment is one of the main attractions. However, despite the sometimes difficult conditions, the group all reported overwhelmingly how much they appreciated the uniqueness of the journey and the opportunity to learn and further the friendship relationship with the people of Lospalos.

**OFFICER DIRECT OR INDIRECT INTEREST**

No person involved in the preparation of this report has a direct or indirect interest requiring disclosure.

**CONCLUSION**

This visit was the first Council supported community initiated cultural and friendship tour to Lospalos, Timor Leste that involved self funded community members and supporters as the main participants. It was also the first tour planned and developed by the Friends of Lospalos Committee.

It provided supporters, Committee members and some officers and Councillors with a unique opportunity to consult with the Lospalos leadership about the future of the friendship relationship and to learn about and experience the social, economic and environmental realities facing our friends in the Lospalos region. Many objectives of this visit were achieved and some welcome but unexpected outcomes were also experienced. The lessons learned and knowledge gained from this visit will inform the development of a Strategic Plan which Friends of Lospalos will present to Council for approval in 2014.

**RECOMMENDATION**

1. That Council receives this report and congratulates the Mornington Peninsula Friends of Lospalos Special Committee and the participants in undertaking this unique journey of friendship and solidarity with the people of Lospalos.
2. That Council endorses the development of a draft Strategic Plan to be brought to Council for approval in 2014.
3. That Council acknowledges the work of the Friends of Lospalos Committee and continue to provide opportunities for partnerships to develop and flourish, enabling greater capacity for cultural exchange and support across the two regions.

**3.5 Delegation to Lospalos, Timor Leste Report (Cont.)**

**COUNCIL DECISION**

**Moved: Cr. Rodgers**

**Seconded: Cr. Pittock**

**That the recommendation be adopted.**

**Carried**

**[VIEW ATTACHMENT 1](#)**

**[VIEW ATTACHMENT 2](#)**