

<b>REPORT TO</b>	Ordinary Meeting of Council	<b>ITEM NO. 2.2</b>
<b>MEETING DATE</b>	2 May 2000	
<b>SUBJECT</b>	<b>Friendship Relationship Between the Mornington Peninsula Shire Council and the District of Los Palos, East Timor</b>	
<b>PREPARED BY</b>	Joe Cauchi, Director - Community Services	
<b>AUTHORISED BY</b>	Chief Executive Officer	
<b>FILE NO.</b>	0540/040/210	

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**MOVED: CR. MARGARET BELL**  
**SECONDED: CR. BILL GOODREM**

**THAT IN ACCORDANCE WITH SECTION 89 (2) OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1989, THE MEETING BE CLOSED TO THE PUBLIC FOR THE DURATION OF DISCUSSION ON THIS ITEM AS THE BUSINESS RELATES TO <REASON>**

CARRIED

#### **SUMMARY**

The purpose of this report is to seek Council approval for the establishment of a formal friendship relationship with the district of Los Palos, East Timor. The intent, once such a relationship is formally established will be to encourage residents of the Mornington Peninsula Shire to provide support to the district of Los Palos in its attempt to re-establish its communities following the destruction that has occurred.

#### **BACKGROUND**

Timor, the Malay word for “Orient” is an island of the Malay Archipelago, the largest and eastern most of the lesser Sundas. Timor is about 500 kilometres distance from Australia and 1,000 kilometres separates its south-west point from Java.

The total area of Timor is 32,350 square kilometres. East Timor occupies an estimated area of almost 19,000 kilometres and comprises the eastern half of the island. In 1996, the population of East Timor was some 800,000 people.

In 1975, Indonesian troops occupied East Timor which was subsequently annexed by Indonesia. On 30 August 1999, the United Nations administered ballot resulted in a 78.5% vote for independence from Indonesia. In the organised campaign of retribution that followed, which included assassination of co-independent supporters, and other acts of violence and destruction against people and property, at least 75% of East Timorese were displaced and 70% of property and infrastructure destroyed. It is unknown how many may have been killed.

The international community responded to events in East Timor with a Security Council resolution to deploy a multi-national force, INTERFET, which was deployed on 20 September 1999. This force has now been replaced by a United Nations Peace Keeping Force. The United Nations Transitional Authority (UNTAET), has been appointed for a period of two (2) years to form the civil administration of the country, to work alongside the East Timorese in reconstruction and towards the creation of a new nation state.

The National Council of East Timorese Resistance Movement (CNRT) is the leading Timorese political and administrative organisation in East Timor. It is led by Xanana Gusmão, President and Jose Ramos Horta, Vice-President and is an umbrella movement of the pro-independence political

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parties. UNTAET is headed by Mr Sergio de Mello, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations.

UNTAET has established a national consolidated council, made up of fifteen (15) members, seven (7) from CNRT, three (3) representatives of political groups outside the CNRT, one (1) from the Catholic Church in East Timor, and three (3) UNTAET members and their Transitional Administrator.

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**BACKGROUND (CONT'D)**

The Catholic Church and East Timorese NGO's are the other key players in the East Timorese community and play an important role in the emergency and reconstruction of civil society.

UNTAET, CNRT and others have committed to work together to develop civil administration and in the transition until democratic elections can be held.

**DISCUSSION**

The Australian community, together with the international community, has watched with great sadness and horror the events in East Timor over the past year.

Xanana Gusmao, President of CNRT, has declared the struggle for independence to be over, however, the new struggle is for reconstruction and development against poverty, disease and illiteracy. The Year 2000 in Timor is to be identified as the "Year of Emergency" – the year in which conditions are put in place for sustainable development. CNRT will work closely with UNTAET in East Timor.

The Australian community is showing a significant concern and goodwill towards East Timor at this time of great need. It is important that when we are seeking ways to help this country and its people, that we collaborate and take direction from the East Timorese people, the actions are co-ordinated and we do not duplicate our efforts.

The CNRT National Commission for Emergency Melbourne Office is under the direction of Abel Gutierrez, and will also work closely with the Timorese community in Victoria, many of whom will be preparing themselves to return to East Timor. Its role is to carry out training and provide information and work and representation of the CNRT in Victoria in addition to the procurement of material and personal needs for reconstruction.

At the National Assembly held in November 1999 in Canberra, the Australian Local Government Association passed a motion which was formally supported by Minister Alexander Downer, the Honourable Laurie Brererton, Opposition Spokesperson on Foreign Affairs and Democrat Senator, Vicki Bourne (refer to Appendix 1). The motion acknowledges the significant skill and experience within Local Government generally to assist East Timor rebuilding its communities. The precursor for any significant action by this Municipality in supporting the East Timorese people is the formal establishment of a friendship relationship between the Mornington Peninsula Shire Council and a specific district in East Timor.

**CONSULTATION**

In January of this year, the Director of Community Services and the then Mayor, Councillor David Gibb met with Mr Abel Gutierrez to seek advice re the establishment of such a relationship and the appropriate district in East Timor. Mr Gutierrez suggested that an appropriate district would be Los Palos because it was similar in geography to that of the Peninsula and one with which the residents of the Mornington Peninsula would readily identify. The population of Los Palos is approximately 50,000 people. Once this relationship was formally established, both sides could then explore together the type of on-going support that would be required in Los Palos.

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**CONCLUSION**

Acknowledging the significant concern and goodwill that exists amongst many of the residents of the Mornington Peninsula towards East Timor at this time of great need, it is important that we, as a Municipality, seek ways in which to help this country and its people that are appropriate and come within the jurisdiction of Local Government.

The first step in achieving this is to formalise a friendship relationship between the Mornington Peninsula Shire Council and a district in East Timor that has been suggested by a representative of the East Timorese leadership itself.

**RECOMMENDATION**

1. THAT COUNCIL APPROVE THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A FORMAL FRIENDSHIP RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE PEOPLE OF THE MORNINGTON PENINSULA SHIRE AND THE PEOPLE OF THE DISTRICT OF LOS PALOS.
2. THAT AN OFFICIAL LETTER EXPRESSING THE SHIRE'S WILLINGNESS TO LINK UP WITH THE DISTRICT OF LOS PALOS BE SENT TO THE PRESIDENT, XANANA GUSMAO.
3. THAT OFFICERS OF THE MORNINGTON PENINSULA SHIRE COUNCIL CONTINUE DISCUSSIONS WITH REPRESENTATIVES OF THE EAST TIMOR LEADERSHIP TO EXPLORE WAYS IN WHICH THE LASTING FRIENDSHIP BETWEEN THE MUNICIPALITY AND THE DISTRICT OF LOS PALOS CAN BE FURTHER CEMENTED AND TO EXPLORE SPECIFIC WAYS IN WHICH THIS MUNICIPALITY CAN BE OF ASSISTANCE TO THE PEOPLE OF LOS PALOS.
4. THAT COUNCIL CONTRIBUTE \$3,000.00 TOWARDS THE PURCHASE OF TRANSPORTATION VEHICLES AND WATER PURIFICATION EQUIPMENT FOR THE DISTRICT OF LOS PALOS.

**PROCEDURAL MOTION**

**Lay on the Table**

MOVED: CR. BELL  
SECONDED: CR. GIBB

THAT THIS ITEM LAY ON THE TABLE.

CARRIED

*Item No. 2.3 was considered at this stage of the meeting.*

ITEM RAISED FROM THE TABLE.

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**COMMITTEE DECISION**

MOVED: CR. RENOUF  
SECONDED: CR. PLUNKETT

THAT THE RECOMMENDATION BE ADOPTED.

CARRIED

**COUNCIL DECISION**

MOVED: CR. MARGARET BELL  
SECONDED: CR. BILL GOODREM

THAT THE RECOMMENDATION BE ADOPTED.

CARRIED