

VU - GREEN PAPER

*SUPPORTING SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT:
FOR TIMOR-LESTE'S FUTURE*

2018 - 2020



Version 3

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ACRONYMS

AETA	Australia East-Timor Association
CNRT	Conselho Nacional Resistencia Timorese (National Council of Timorese Resistance)
CPLP	Community of Portuguese Language Countries
ETSA	East-Timor Students Association
LGA	Local Government Authority
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
T-L	Timor-Leste
UN	United Nations
UNTL	Universidade Nacional Timor Lorosa'e
VU	Victoria University

1. TIMOR-LESTE BACKGROUND

The Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste (T-L) was the first new sovereign state recognised by the United Nations (UN) in the 21st Century, on 20 May, 2002. The country had previously been a Portuguese colony for nearly 200 years, declaring independence in 1975. A period of Indonesian occupation ensued, which ended in August 1999, after UN-mediated negotiations and a referendum. T-L is less than 800km from Darwin, making it significant geopolitically and socio-culturally for Australia, and an obvious target for involvement in the nation's development.

T-L is 16 times smaller than Victoria (14,919 sq. kms) with a population, one-fifth the size (1.2 million people). The most populous city is the capital, Dili, with over 250,000 people; other large centres are Ermera (127,000) and Baucau (124,000), but nearly 72% of Timorese live in areas classified as rural.

T-L is the Asian country with the highest rate of Catholicism (96.9%), while Protestant and Evangelic worshippers represent 2.2% and Muslims 0.3% of the population.

2. IN BRIEF: VICTORIA UNIVERSITY & T-L

Victoria University (VU) has been closely and continuously engaged with T-L for over 30 years. In 1998, VU's Centre for Asia-Pacific Studies began to co-host seminars with the Australia-East Timor Association (AETA) on development issues in T-L such as health, sustainable development, education and agriculture. In December 1998, Jose Ramos-Horta, representative of the CNRT (National Council of Timorese Resistance) suggested that VU co-host an international seminar on Strategic Development Planning for T-L. In 2009, VU recognised the contribution of Jose Ramos-Horta by admitting him 'to the degree of Doctor of the University *honoris causa*, in recognition of his outstanding commitment to the defence of human rights and for his contribution to establishing the independence of T-L.'¹

Since 2003, VU has had **173 Timorese** alumni (October, 2017) who either live here in Australia or back in T-L with **females** representing **39.3%** and **males 60.7%** of that total. The average age of our alumni is **41 years of age**, with the **youngest 24** and **eldest 64**. Courses they have been enrolled in are from **Victoria Polytechnic, College of Arts & Education, College of Business, College of Engineering & Sciences** and **College of Health & Biomedicine**.

T-L is referenced in Victoria University's Strategic Plan (2016 – 2020), and has a deep commitment from the Vice Chancellor, Professor Peter Dawkins AO. He has appointed the Hon. Jean McLean (who was a Victorian Parliamentarian for many years and awarded the Order of T-L by the T-L national Government in 2015 in recognition of her long history of promoting the interest of the country) as his Special Advisor on T-L.

¹ Victoria University Website, *President Ramos-Horta awarded Honorary Degree by Victoria University*, <https://www.vu.edu.au/news-events/news/president-ramos-horta-awarded-honorary-degree-by-victoria-university>, (Viewed: 20 October, 2017)

VU has hosted the Honorary Consulate of the Democratic Republic of T-L at its Flinders Lane Campus for many years, and has close linkages with the T-L National Government and its various departments, and the University of Timor-Loro Sa'e (UNTL)

3. VU & T-L S.W.O.T. ANALYSIS

The following SWOT analysis provides a base to consider VU's future strategic activities with T-L. These key points arose from meetings conducted with internal and external parties in October-November, 2017.

STRENGTHS <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Long history of work by VU in T-L and here in Melbourne. 2. VU's Strategic Plan has T-L embedded and we have a commitment to the nation. 3. Large alumni base in T-L. 4. VU is considered a desirable University to study at by T-L citizens in Australia. 5. Generations of committed and passionate individuals are involved (e.g. – Hon. Jean McLean, Dr Helen Hill) 6. VU's reputation for its work in Australia, especially Victoria and in T-L. 7. VU is clearly seen as the main T-L-related University player in Victoria by the Victorian State and Commonwealth Governments. 	WEAKNESSES <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. No clear institutional objectives or planning; activities currently arranged ad-hoc. 2. No committed, ongoing, presence in-country. 3. Expensive models of connection with no clear Return on Investment (RoI) specified. 4. The basis of VU's connection is in line with the country's history and development. 5. Original agents of connection are ageing with no real clear plan of succession. 6. Current lines of communication with the country are deep but unsystematic. 7. Lack of external funding
OPPORTUNITIES <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Better leverage, and partnerships, for increased reputation. 2. Look to leverage alternative funding sources (e.g. – governments, philanthropy) to advance VU's T-L objectives. 3. Look where possible to collaborate with other universities and organisations to advance mutually-beneficial T-L objectives. 4. Better connect with VU T-L alumni to achieve the objectives of T-L and VU's work in country. 5. VU to leverage work done in T-L in a more comprehensive manner via various channels (in-person, internal and external networks, web, social media and media) to demonstrate the impressive work conducted by VU in a developing nation. 6. Victoria has the largest Timorese population of any state/territory in Australia. 	THREATS <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. VU finds difficulty in funding T-L activities in its current financial climate. 2. VU cannot find staff willing to step into a T-L leadership role (at least in a way that rewards this activity). 3. If T-L program connection is not demonstrably efficient and effective, it minimises the positive impacts in T-L, and threatens ongoing activities.

4. T-L STRATEGIC PLAN: 2018 – 2020 OBJECTIVES

VU's long-standing history with the T-L nation is strong and continuing. As an Australian university held in high regard and respect in the country, VU aims to continue working collaboratively with the T-L national government, its institutions and its people to develop and uplift their communities providing professional, academic and skills development for our academics, students, staff and the Timorese people for a sustainable and successful future. It is proposed that this will occur via five pillars of focus, to ensure translational outcomes. Those five pillars, based upon existing modes of engagement, are:

1. **Student Exchange & Experience**
Foster opportunities in selected VU course areas to include T-L studies as part of the course, potentially to complement an in-country T-L study tour experience.
2. **Academic Engagement**
Support academic scholarship aimed at uplifting communities in T-L with other Universities & Institutions (e.g. – ACU, ANU, Charles Darwin, and Federation etc.)
3. **Skills & Service Development**
Explore opportunities for Victoria Polytechnic to develop industries and develop skills and services in T-L.
4. **Community Impact & Service**
Link with the Victorian Timorese community and in-country to build capability and network connectedness for the betterment of the Timorese people and nation.
5. **Government Connection & Networks**
Work collaboratively with Local Government Authority (LGA) Friendship Groups across Victoria, the Victorian State Government, Commonwealth of Australia and T-L national government through their applicable ministries/departments along with NGO's, Universities and agencies to foster opportunities for community uplift in T-L.



5. VU's T-L - ENGAGEMENT MATRIX

VU's Engagement Matrix with T-L has come about via conversations and interviews with existing internal and external players.

Themes of VU's T-L Engagement		CON CONTINUE	RED REDEVELOP	COM COMMENCE	CEA CEASE	Possible Strategic Actions
Student Exchange & Experience VU Domestic Students Study Tours to T-L	Community Development					Develop efficient and effective administrative processes and procedures to manage an interdisciplinary approach to Study Tours.
	Education					
	Engineering & Sciences					
	Law & Justice					
Academic Engagement Academic scholarship around T-L	Biennial Conference(s) – UNTL / VU & T-L Studies Association (TLSA)					Although the Conference with UNTL comes at some expense to the University, VU will plan to hold the 2019 conference, but potentially in a more effective and efficient manner.
	Educating T-L Students <i>VU Foundation – T-L Scholarships</i>					Develop efficient, and effective, processes and procedures to manage the selection and administration of the T-L Scholarships Program.
	Timor-Leste Studies Association (TLSA)					Work with the TLSA to see if there are forms of collaboration, and opportunities, for academic scholarship in T-L.
	Universidade Nacional Timor Lorosa'e (UNTL)					Re-examine the previous MoU with UNTL to develop an agreement that will be one of mutuality and reciprocity for both Universities.

	VU Library Repository (Footscray Park)					Work with VU Library to ensure that the T-L Repository is relevant and ways to promote it to the public.
Skills & Service Development Development of Skills and Industries in T-L	Victoria Polytechnic (Vic Poly) & Dili Institute of Technology (DIT)					Foster mechanisms for re-establishing a strong VU-DIT partnership, potentially working in-country
Community Impact & Service	Australian East Timor Association (AETA)					Look at mechanisms for maximising the benefits of working collaboratively between these group, using the frames of the TLSDP and the UN SDGs.
	Timorese People (In Country)					
	Victorian – LGA Friendship Groups					
	East-Timor Students Association (ETSA)					
	T-L Strategic Development Plan (2011 – 2030)					
	United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (2015 – 2030)					
Government Connection & Networks	Honorary T-L Consulate (VU Flinders Lane Campus - Melbourne CBD)					Continue to host the T-L Consulate at VU and look for opportunities to leverage the relationship for mutual benefit
	Australian Commonwealth Government (Dept. of Foreign Affairs & Trade (DFAT))					Foster a relationship with DFAT to ensure recognition and support of VU’s ongoing activities in T-L.
	Victorian State Government (Department of Premier & Cabinet)					Continue to foster strong a relationship, particularly around support for internships/training and consulate support

	Hon. Steve Bracks					Continue to support the activities of Mr Bracks in governance development in T-L
	Professor John Thwaite Monash Sustainable Development Institute (MSDI)					Foster a relationship with the MSDI to look for opportunities of mutual benefit for the SDGs in T-L.
	Victorian Local Government Authorities (particularly City of Moonee Valley & Melton City Council)					Foster a relationship with the 17 LGAs which have formally set up municipal relationships in T-L, with a focus on the west of Melbourne LGAs.

6. GREEN PAPER: T-L RECOMMENDATIONS

This Green Paper is the forerunner to a final VU T-L Strategy. We outline the following key recommendations that are proposed to underpin the final Strategy after subsequent consultation.

1	Build relationships with VU's Colleges for T-L related practicums as an option for insertion into existing College courses, instead of maintaining a specific T-L unit. This will engage and enlighten VU students on various aspects of T-L society.
2	Develop an efficient and unified joint-planning approach to VU student study tours to T-L for VU Colleges (and potentially other stakeholder groups outside VU).
3	Strengthen a T-L-led student association/alumni group as a way of being able to socialise and communicate between past, present and future students who have or will study at VU (and possibly other Victorian institutions).
4	Consider the development of a "Journal of T-L Studies", potentially combining academic articles, more practical case studies, and articles on various issues in T-L (perhaps similar to what the recently-developed Engagement Australia journal).
5	Work through Victoria Polytechnic to re-establish links with the Dili Institute of Technology (DIT) and to reinforce the value of skills training as a valuable complement to higher education.
6	Consider the possibility of working in a coordinating role between national and Australian State Governments, institutions and philanthropists in the development of new industries and job creation in T-L.
7	Liaise with UNTL as the joint sponsor to consider the ongoing value of, and potential alternative models for offering, the biennial VU-UNTL T-L Conference.
8	<p>Develop, and enhance, existing and new connections VU has with key stakeholders/interest groups surrounding T-L as a communication and collaboration mechanism are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Victoria University – Research Flagships • T-L Honorary Consulate (Melbourne) • T-L National Government and Applicable Ministries • Universities (ACU / Swinburne / Federation / Monash / Charles Darwin) • Victorian State & Aust. Federal Government & Applicable Departments • Politicians – Steve Bracks / Richard Wynne • Monash Sustainable Development Institute – Professor John Thwaites • Australian East Timorese Association (AETA) • Local Friendship Groups (especially in LGA's where VU is based) • East Timorese Students Association (ETSA) • Universidade Nacional Timor Lorosa'e (UNTL) • Dili Institute of Technology (DIT).
9	VU should continue to use the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), planned to be in place until 2030, to inform its engagement activities with the T-L Government and Timorese people.

10	Establish a succession-planning process to encourage next-generation VU staff to support the work of VU in T-L.
11	Develop processes and procedures around the selection, funding and administration for the VU Foundation T-L Scholarships to ensure transparency and well-communicated processes to all involved.
12	Consider the development of a T-L Collaborative Research Group based at VU encompassing TLSA Researchers, and those from VU and other Universities with an interest in T-L.

7. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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All recommendations and observations are attributable to the authors.