

Developing strong ties with our neighbour East Timor.

Australia and East Timor's bilateral relationship is strong, which is reflected in history and through numerous visits between Australia and East Timor. Recently, ten Members from East Timor's Parliamentary Committee on Economic, Finance and Anti-corruption visited Western Australia where they met with myself and Speaker of the Legislative Assembly, the Hon Grant Woodhams, in the Aboriginal People's Room at Parliament House.

As a close neighbour, Western Australia is strongly committed to East Timor's development priorities and provides support and aid through development assistance. At the meeting, we discussed further economic cooperation between Western Australia and East Timor, noting the common interest in developing off-shore petroleum resources. We also discussed how the East Timorese Government could promote private sector investment as a stimulant for long-term development.

Australia has a special affinity with East Timor stretching back many decades. Australia was in the front-line support for East Timor's transition to independence, including Australia's leadership role in the first UN monitoring mission, UNAMET (United Nations Mission in East Timor). I have also had some personal involvement with East Timor since independence in 1999. I visited East Timor twice with constituents from Margaret River, Bruce and Margaret English, who were later awarded AO's for their work in East Timor. Whilst in East Timor, we helped source badly needed fire fighting equipment from Western Australia for three local centres. We also raised funds and supplied Western Australian volunteer tradesmen to build a school in the hills near Dili, which was destroyed following the 1999 post-ballot violence.

As part of efforts to contribute to improved governance in East Timor, a presentation was given to the Delegation by the Public Accounts Committee and the Auditor General on government accountability mechanisms.

