

KANGAROO VALLEY-REMEXIO PARTNERSHIP

In the 12 months since our last 'Not the Buster Keaton' film night, we have been quite active.

Sam Fritz was in Timor Leste from February to July this year and was most helpful as a man-on-the-ground facilitating our various projects while developing friendships. Sam often stayed at the Santa Cruz 'Student House' which we funded using money raised by Oxley College. This accommodation in central Dili is most important for students from outlying areas. Sandy Fritz, who has just returned, also stayed there while she pursued her agricultural project and was welcomed most royally.

Other projects this year were: ongoing support for student scholarships, rebuilding the netball court, a long pathway of concrete stairs, installing solar lights at the (remote) Roluli School, and continuing training and installing solar lights (in conjunction with ATA). The overall total will be approximately 1200 houses.

We have also started an association with CNEFP at Tibar. This is a most impressive organisation started and directed by one Timorese man. It is very like a top quality TAFE facility in Australia. CNEFP students helped with the Roluli installation. Providing scholarships for students to attend CNEFP will be wonderful as their graduating students have a high employment rate.

When Libby and I returned from our recent visit, we concluded that the most enduring contribution from our Kangaroo Valley group was indeed 'friendship'. Relationships are highly valued by the Timorese and our visit was met with great warmth and joy. Many of our Timorese friends have visited the Valley over the years. We are all older but it is wonderful to see that most have jobs and families. Most Timorese are not yet so fortunate.

This is our 15th year. The many Timor Leste groups like ours have become known as 'friendship groups'. I believe we were the first of this type to form after the violent separation from Indonesia in 1999.

Congratulations go to the Wesley-Smith boys (boys?), Peter, Martin and Rob. They all recently attended a special award ceremony in Dili, where they and a select group were awarded honour medals in recognition and appreciation for the activism they contributed during the Timorese struggle against oppression prior to 2000.

Paul Turnock, Oct 1 2014