Submission No 34

Inquiry into Australia’s Relationship with Timor-Leste

Name: Sister Eileen (Rita) Hayes
Submission Reference:  Cultural, educational exchanges  
Person to person links

To whom it may concern:

I am writing from Timor Leste and have only just had access to information regarding the 
above inquiry.  My submission is brief because of the time restraint but I can gladly produce 
more detailed information on request.

I have been living and working in Timor Leste since 2000.  Untill 2005 I lived in the 
mountain village of Railaco Craic, District of Ermera where I was a member of the 
Community Development Team, Comunidade Edmund Rice.  I assume their work will form 
part of this inquiry.

BUILDING AND RESOURCING SENIOR SECONDARY COLLEGE:

From 2007 I have been living and working in Railaco Vila, District of Ermera.  My principle 
role has been in the Senior Secondary School, Nossa Senhora de Fatima where I teach and 
am the resource person and link person for resource and cultural exchanges with Colleges, 
schools and generous people in Australia and other nations.

Through the generosity of Australian people we have built an entire senior secondary school 
in Railaco.  This consists of six classrooms, an administrative block, and toilet facilities.  In 
addition $US 50,000 water system has been installed that supplies water to the school, nearby 
church facilities and the neighbouring community.  School power is supplied by a solar 
power system donated by the Leeds Catholic community, England and supplied and installed 
by Australian volunteers.

The school has been totally furnished and resourced by donations from colleges, schools and 
families in Australia.

EDUCATIONAL AND CULTURAL EXCHANGES:

During the past six years there have been numerous educational and cultural exchanges 
between students, teachers and volunteers from Australia and Timor Leste. The visitors and 
the Timor students have been involved in English, music and art classes and also sport and 
physical education.  The Timorese have willingly offered hospitality and the sharing of their 
cultural riches. The amount of goodwill generated through these exchanges in incalculable.

SCHOLARSHIP SCHEME:

Through the generosity of donors, schools and individuals I conduct an extensive educational
scholarship scheme. There are currently over one hundred (100) tertiary student recipients of these scholarships and there are sixty (60) senior secondary student recipients. This scholarship scheme has been in operation since 2001 and has averaged a cost of $US 40,000 per year, totally from donations.

**VOLUNTEERS:**

Volunteers from Australia have been involved with school maintenance, teaching classes and sharing resources. Volunteers, doctors and nurses, have also been involved in working in the Mobile Health Clinic in Railaco and groups of dentists and eye doctors have rendered service on various visits to the District.

Sister Eileen (Rita) Hayes sgs