



Australia and Timor Leste enjoy a special bond in Scouting

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As part of its strategy of supporting the growth and development of Scouting in Timor Leste, Scouts Australia continues to assist in various ways including sponsorship of young people from that country to international events.

Timor Leste is the world's second newest sovereign nation rich in history, with 1.1 million people, nestled between Australia, Papua New Guinea and Indonesia.



Following an approach from the World Organization of the Scout Movement/Asia-Pacific Region, Scouts Australia is assisting to enhance the capability of Uniao Nacional Dos Escuteiros De Timor Leste (UNE-TL) to grow Scouting across Timor-Leste, Neville Tomkins, the International Commissioner of Scouts Australia said.

Through an Australian young people Ambassador for Development (AYAD), and other measures, Scouts Australia is assisting UNE-TL to establish its National Office, and to undertake its inaugural membership census.



Late last year, Scouts Australia facilitated a 4 day Advanced Training Course for 32 participants from UNE-TL, Mr Tomkins added. It was extraordinarily successful, with credit to the three highly qualified Australian trainers, Paul Parkinson, Peter Blatch and Bryan Brown. Scouts Australia hopes to provide further training this year.

It is anticipated that these support arrangements will assist UNE-TL to seek membership over the coming years of World Scouting.

Tomkins said that the newly elected Council of UNE-TL were delighted that the President of the Republic of Timor-Leste, His Excellency José Ramos-Horta, accepted their invitation to be the Patron which investiture took place on 12 January in Dili.



Tomkins said that "Scouts Australia is also keen to support young people from Timor Leste to experience Scouting in Australia, and elsewhere."

It was in this context that Scouts Australia has sponsored 4 UNE-TL young people to the 15th Australian Venture ("Wild Dayz") in Tasmania earlier this month. It was their first time out of Timor-Leste, or on a plane and enjoyed participating in a wide-range on-site activities during the Australian Venture, and even visited a wildlife park.



"Initially it was a daunting experience for the four young people: Joanna, Cacilio, Bonifacia and Juvinal and each had an extraordinary Scouting experience. And it was Scouting that gave them this international experience, and the opportunity to meet Scouts from other parts of the world," Tomkins said.

He concluded by explaining about the special bond that exists between Australia and Timor-Leste. During World War II, the local Timorese people gave invaluable support to the Australian government and in expressing their gratitude, Australia remarked that "we will never forget you".

It is through Scouting that Australia is also showing that it will never forget the people of its nearest neighbor.