



*Connecting Communities
Strengthening Democracy*

Statement to VLGA members

VLGA participation in 2012 Timor-Leste National Election Observer Mission

As you may be aware, the VLGA has a long history of involvement with Timor-Leste, including supporting Australian local government friendship groups, organising conferences and forums on Timor-Leste, and participating in international observer missions to the 1999 referendum, and the elections in 2002 and 2007.

The involvement by Australians in observing the elections is highly valued by the Timorese and, in 2007, the observer missions organised by the VLGA were the largest of any international non-government organisation.

A number of members have asked whether the VLGA will be organising delegations to observe the Timor-Leste National Elections which will be held early next year. It is expected that the Presidential election will be held in March 2012, and the Parliamentary election in late June 2012.

Following discussions with the Australia Timor-Leste Friendship Network, it has been decided that the observer missions for next year's elections will be organised by them, with VLGA representatives participating as delegates.

Accordingly, if your Council or friendship group is interested in observing the elections next year as volunteers, I would encourage you to submit an expression of interest with the Network – details on the VLGA website (see below).

Meanwhile, the VLGA will continue to remain actively involved in supporting initiatives by local government and community groups involved in friendship relationships, with the Victorian Government's program of training of Timor-Leste government officials and with the preparations for the election of Municipal Government in Timor-Leste, expected in 2013.

To register your interest in becoming an observer please contact Rae Kingsbury, Convenor Australia Timor-Leste Friendship Network at raemerlynperry@gmail.com or www.austimorfn.com.

For further information regarding the VLGA's involvement with Timor-Leste, or any other issue, go to our website at www.vlga.org.au or contact our Timor-Leste Project Officer, Gary Jungwirth via email at gary@vlga.org.au or telephone (03) 9349 7986.