



OFFICE OF THE PRIME MINISTER

**ADDRESS BY HIS EXCELLENCY THE PRIME MINISTER
KAY RALA XANANA GUSMAO
AT THE OPENING OF THE TIMOR 1942 EXHIBITION
AT THE ANZAC MEMORIAL, HYDE PARK, SYDNEY**

Sydney, Australia

19 February 2012

New South Wales Minister for Sport and Recreation, Graham Annesley
Barry Grant, President, Commando Association of Australia, NSW
Darren Mitchell, Director Office of Veteran's Affairs
Veterans and their families

It is a pleasure to be here with you today to open this Exhibition.

Thank you Minister Annesley for your words of solidarity.

Yesterday I was in Canberra for a meeting with the Australian Prime Minister and we talked about our countries shared history in the 2nd World War.

It was a defining time in the relationship between the Timorese and Australians - but also a time in which nationality was transcended, and as human beings our people not only suffered deep pain, they also demonstrated acts of great altruism.

Today the Australian Prime Minister is in Darwin to take part in ceremonies commemorating the bombing of Darwin which started just before 10 am, on 19 February, 70 years ago today.

This was the first direct attack on Australian soil and has had a profound effect on the Australian psyche.

While the devastating extent of the bombing was kept secret from most of the Australian population at the time, the stories of despair and survival in Darwin are now embedded in the Australian national story.

What is still less well known, outside of Timor-Leste, is that at 10 o'clock that night 1,000 Japanese troops landed in Dili

Australian troops had already been on the ground in then neutral Portuguese Timor, for some months. When the Japanese landed, the Australians found themselves fighting a war in difficult conditions, in the hills of our country. They showed great courage and spirit.

They were supported by Timorese people. Many Timorese volunteered to help the soldiers and, at great risk, they carried packs and ammunition, cooked for the troops, and fought alongside them.

This display of solidarity and humanity is a strong foundation for our shared history.

More than 50,000 Timorese lost their lives during World War II. This was a large part of our population and resulted in great hurt to our people. We must not forget this loss.

It has resulted in bonds of friendship and honour that have left an enduring legacy.

The Australian soldiers that fought in Timor during the War have continued to return to our homeland to maintain the friendship with our people, and to support our communities.

One such soldier that we all remember is of course Paddy Kenneally.

Paddy was a great friend of Timor. I was impressed, and touched, by the depth of his connection with Timor, and with his dear friend Rufino Alves Coresia who supported him during the war.

We miss both of these great characters in our shared history.

This connection, forged in war, has also helped the cause of Timor-Leste.

The former soldiers have worked to remind Australians of the support they received from the Timorese in the War, and in doing so have fostered goodwill between us that will last for generations to come.

This Exhibition is a memorial to the acts of goodwill and bravery that bonded humans together.

It showcases exhibits from the 2nd World War – and tells the stories of men and women in times of darkness, and highlight acts of courage and compassion.

In this way, it also acts as a reminder of the great costs of war and of conflict – and, therefore, encourages us to strive for peace.

It is important to remember.

Ladies and gentlemen,

I trust that this Exhibition that we are opening today will remind us of the deep bonds forged between Australians and the Timorese during the 2nd World War.

Let us continue to honour their bravery and their sacrifice, through building on our shared values and our collective history.

I commend and thank the curators of the exhibition for undertaking this important project.

Thank you very much.

Kay Rala Xanana Gusmão
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