



SPOKESPERSON V CONSTITUTIONAL GOVERNMENT



MEDIA RELEASE

28 January, 2015
Díli, Timor-Leste

Vale Tom Uren

It was with deep sadness that the Government of Timor-Leste heard of the passing of the Honorable Tom Uren AC on the 26th of January 2015. On behalf of the Government, the Prime Minister, H.E. Kay Rala Xanana Gusmão, presents heartfelt condolences to his family, friends and colleagues.

Tom Uren is held in high regard in Timor-Leste as a man of dignity and courage. As deputy leader of the Australian Labor Party he gave his attention to the cause of the Timorese people when very few in the Australian political spectrum were prepared to raise their voice in advocacy. His determination led to the adoption of a resolution in favor of self-determination at the ALP Conference in 1977 and contributed to the 1977 US Congressional Hearings into Timor-Leste. He constantly supported Timorese asylum seekers and, with his fellow World War II veterans Paddy Kenneally and Gordon Hart, was patron of the Australian East Timor Association of NSW [AETA-NSW]. Tom spoke powerfully many times over the years of struggle about what was happening in Timor-Leste and consistently gave support to Australian activists working in solidarity with the Timorese people.

Tom's experience as a prisoner of war after being captured in West Timor in 1942 forever shaped his life. Although it could have left him with bitterness, instead it led to a steadfast conviction about the value of mutual support and collective action. He endorsed Martin Luther King's words that "Hate distorts the personality and scars the soul. It is more injurious to the hater than the hated."

After the war he never forgot his fellow prisoners of war and worked for them his whole life. It seemed to the Timorese friends he made over the years that his experience of suffering and injustice drew him in close to the suffering and injustice experienced by the Timorese people.

On the 1st of July 2013 Tom Uren was awarded the Order of Timor-Leste Medal by the President of Timor-Leste, H.E. Taur Matan Ruak, in a ceremony in Canberra. The medal was accepted by his son, Mick. The Order of Timor-Leste Medal is an award of prestige and dignity presented to those to have significantly contributed to the benefit of Timor-Leste, the Timorese or Mankind. In the case of Tom Uren, through a life well lived, he contributed to the benefit of all three. Timor-Leste will always be grateful for his contribution and character.



Ágio Pereira
+670 77045002
agio.pereira@cdm.gov.tl
govtlmedia@gmail.com
www.timor-leste.gov.tl

In an interview given in 1996 Tom was asked how he would like to be remembered. He said “as a person of goodwill, a giver, a fighter for peace.” This is forever how Timor-Leste will remember Tom Uren, as someone who made a difference in the history of our nation through an extraordinary life as a person of goodwill, a giver and a fighter for peace. **ENDS**



Ágio Pereira

+670 77045002

agio.pereira@cdm.gov.tl

govtlmedia@gmail.com

www.timor-leste.gov.tl