



## SPOKESPERSON SIXTH CONSTITUTIONAL GOVERNMENT



**MEDIA  
RELEASE**

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### **The Flag of Timor-Leste flies proudly before 200,000 people on Anzac day**

On Saturday the 25<sup>th</sup> of April a group of Timorese veterans lead by H.E. Kay Rala Xanana Gusmão, Major General Lere Anan Timur and Mr. António Gomes da Costa (Ma'Huno) marched before 200,000 people at the Anzac day march in Sydney, Australia. Also marching were Mr. Vasco da Gama (Criado), Mr. Gil da Costa Monteiro (Oan Soro), Mr. César dos Santos da Silva (Merak) along with several other veterans of the Timorese struggle for independence who had been based in Sydney during the visit.

At the same time in the capital cities of all Australian states and territories seven other delegations of esteemed veterans were marching, heads held high, proudly flying the flag of Timor-Leste.

Anzac day was especially significant this year as it marked the 100-year anniversary of the landing of Australian troops on Gallipoli in World War I.

Marches on the 25<sup>th</sup> of April capped off several days of commemorations, meetings and presentations across Australia attended by the delegations. Reflecting on their experiences veterans considered the visit had achieved its three principal goals: to build on the friendship of Timor's veterans with the veteran community of Australia, to learn about models for veteran service and to offer respects to the servicemen and women of Australia.

Last year Australia's eminent veterans group, the Returned and Services League (RSL) resolved in the New South Wales State Council to invite Timor-Leste veterans 'participate as fellow veterans and allies in the 2015 ANZAC Day March and other commemoration services in Sydney'. At a farewell dinner in Sydney on Sunday the State President of the RSL (NSW Branch), Mr. Rod White, declared that it had been a privilege for their organization to work with the veterans of Timor-Leste and he emphasized that the strengthened bonds of friendship between the two veterans communities were part of what would be "an enduring relationship."

Similar sentiments were echoed in other farewell gatherings across the country.

Speakers in Australia consistently referred to the connection between the two veteran communities as having its foundation in the strong relationship forged between Australian soldiers and the Timorese people



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in the Second World War. Many made mention of the “Debt of Honor” they feel as a result of this relationship, recognizing both the extraordinary value of the Timorese assistance and also its brutal consequences.

The trip to Australia is part of a series of visits between the two countries. Australian veterans and officials of the RSL met with their Timorese counterparts in Dili last year. Timor-Leste has invited representatives of the RSL to attend the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of FALINTIL on the 20<sup>th</sup> of August 2015 and the newly declared National Veterans Day on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of March 2016.

Veterans took away many ideas from their Australian experience that may be used to assist in the development of the new Council of the Combatants of National Liberation [CCNL] and other veteran activities. These included ideas on how to tell the story of the struggle for future generations, how to honor the fallen ones and how to best serve those remaining. The veterans particularly appreciated the large numbers of school students that were participating in the Australian ceremonies and the use of personal stories of individual servicemen and women to connect with the younger generations.

Spokesperson for the Government, Minister of State Agio Pereira noted “the relationship between the veterans communities of Australia and Timor-Leste is a shining example of what can be achieved in a spirit of friendship and respect. Timor-Leste is deeply appreciative of the way this ‘enduring partnership’ is developing to the benefit of all.” **ENDS**

Photos and other information about the visit can be found at [www.veteranvisit2015.org](http://www.veteranvisit2015.org)



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