

**Official lunch hosted by the Premier of Victoria**

**Wednesday 27 August 2008**

**The Gippsland Room, Investment Centre**

**Level 46, 55 Collins St Melbourne**

The Honourable John Brumby MP, Premier of Victoria

Honourable Ministers

Distinguished guests, including my dear friend, Mr Harold Mitchell AO

I would like to thank the Premier, John Brumby, the Victorian Government and the Victorian people for welcoming us to Melbourne.

I would also like to take this opportunity to acknowledge members of my delegation:

Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr Zacarias da Costa;

Minister for Finance, Ms Emilia Pires;

Minister for Justice, Lúcia Lobato;

Minister for Education, Mr João Cândio Freitas;

Ambassador to Australia, Mr Hernani Coelho;

Chief of the Defence Force, Brigadier Taur Matan Ruak;

Secretary of State for Professional Training and Employment, Mr Bendito Freitas;

Secretary of State for Security, Mr Francisco da Costa;

Our Consul-General in New South Wales, Mr. Abel Guterres;

Our Honorary Consul here in Melbourne, Mr Kevin Bailey and the

Australian Ambassador to Timor-Leste, Mr Peter Heyward, who is part of our delegation for this visit.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The people of Timor-Leste have a very strong bond with the State of Victoria.

Minister Emilia Pires, our Minister for Finance, and many other members of my Government either studied, or worked here at some stage in their lives.

There are more Timorese living in Melbourne than any other city in Australia.

In fact there are more Timorese living in Melbourne than in many of our villages in Timor-Leste.

I am sorry to report though Premier, that despite the influence of all these Victorians - it is soccer and not Australian Rules Football that obsesses the young people of Timor – including my three boys.

I am sure all of you here today know that I have a very personal connection with Melbourne.

My wonderful wife Kirsty lived here for many years and Melbourne is still home to my mother-in-law, Rosalie, who is with us today.

Melbourne was where my hard working adviser Betti Exposto grew up when her family was exiled in 1975.

And of course it is home to my Special Adviser and friend, the Honourable Steve Bracks who can't be here today as he is on a well earned holiday.

I have been very thankful for the counsel of Mr Bracks throughout the first year of my coalition Government.

I want to thank the Victorian Government for the back up support provided to Mr Bracks, in particular the Police Commissioner, Ms Christine Nixon.

And your Public Service Advocate, Mr Greg Vines is now working hard to set up a Civil Service Commission.

I also want to thank the Victorian Government for the consistent and generous support it has provided to my country over many years.

The projects funded by your Government are too many to mention here today – our lunch would turn into dinner.

But I want to sincerely thank you Premier for the two new initiatives you announced today including the assistance with procurement and the assistance with building regulations.

Ladies and Gentlemen;

The fact is we still need you working with us.

And we can credit much of our progress to the support given by the Victorian Government and the thousands of Victorians who are members of Timor-Leste

Friendship groups, friendship schools, Rotary clubs, church groups and other philanthropic organizations.

You are our loyal friends and our steadfast partners.

I hope to build on the close relationship forged between Timor-Leste and the Victorian Government.

It would be a privilege for me to one day host a lunch in my country in honour of the Premier of Victoria, John Brumby.

While you are in Dili you can perhaps try to teach my boys Australian rules football.

And Kirsty says she will help you encourage them to support Collingwood!

Thank you again.