

**Project Name:**

Veteran Vocational Education Training Scheme (VVETS) Timor-Leste

Overview:

This project has been initiated and supported by Michael Stone, Director of Timor-Awakening, Honorary Consul to Timor-Leste, Queensland.

In recognition and respect to the support and sacrifice that the poorest of Timorese communities provided through many conflicts, veterans of Australia and Timor-Leste are providing pathways out of poverty, pathways of peace and pathways of dignity through education. As part of the Timor Awakening program, Australian and Timorese veterans have been collaborating in the development of an education centre south of Same, Timor-Leste. Whilst many development projects and international support halted due to the Covid19 crisis, the veteran's education centre in Same made remarkable progress, and started classes in January 2021. The facility will provide vocational education; training and life skills for rural youth to enable poverty alleviation develop rural markets and support labour mobility. VVETS plan to build 4 more education centres, established in rural nodes through all four of the historic Falintil regions.

Same has a population of 7,413, and is the capital of Manufahi District [population 53,691 – Census 2015] is located in the central region. After Timor-Leste's independence from Indonesia, the town was almost completely destroyed by Indonesian militias.

Project Activity:

Palms Australia www.palms.org.au facilitates various programs to achieve our overall objective which is to open our palms and reach beyond every barrier of culture, religion, nationality and gender empowering cooperation to achieve a just, sustainable, interdependent and peaceful world free of poverty.

The Palms Australia long-term volunteering program wishes to support the placement of Colleen Thornton-Ward for two years to meet the request of the VVETS activities in Same, Timor-Leste.

Role Description:

Colleen Thornton-Ward's role will be as English Teacher/Mentor within the Veteran English Centre. Her role will include teaching vocational English [to school/University students, veterans and community members] as well as providing mentoring/support for the existing Timorese English teachers who are not formally qualified. Whilst the primary focus of the English Centre is teaching language, the Centre will also develop skills in hospitality, agriculture, small business, and to support language learning for seasonal labourers and the Pacific labour schemes.

Duration of the Role:

Long term volunteering generally involves two to three years. For the purposes of this funding application Palms has outlined costs for a 1-year overseas placement.

Timing:

Due to COVID-19 it is uncertain when Colleen will be able to depart for Timor-Leste. However, the preparation course is planned for July 2021.

**Who will benefit:**

The aim of the Veteran Education Centre is to empower rural poor citizens with skills that will benefit rural economic development, international trade cooperation [through Labour Schemes]. Rural Timorese will benefit from skill development that will create local job opportunities, invigorate learning and cooperation outside of Dili [capital of Timor-Leste]. Young people, Timorese veterans and the broader community will be able to access educational opportunities, whilst remaining with their families, rather than having to relocate to already densely populated urban areas.

Currently the Centre has 27 full time registrations [17 female and 10 male]. There are 51 part time registrations but most of the high school and university students have not yet returned after Christmas holidays and the state of emergency. Therefore, it is expected that numbers will increase.

Why the 2/2 Commando Association should provide financial support:

The shared history of the 2/2 Commando Association, Colleen Thornton-Ward's family and Timor-Leste is strongly aligned with the work of the supporting groups [Veterans Care Association and Timor Awakening]. Colleen's family has a 77 year friendship with Timor-Leste through her father and godfather's involvement in 4 Section of the Commandos.

An overseas volunteer placement with the VVETS through Palms Australia, would enable Colleen and the 2/2 Commando Association to directly continue supporting the Timorese to rebuild their country through creating sustainable educational opportunities that benefits families and communities into the future.

Attachments

Please find attached a cost outline for a one-year Palms Australia overseas volunteer assignment.