

Timor-lesle library sector boom

Timor-Leste has a new purpose-built library, trained library staff, a brand new library association and a national library on the way. All this has been achieved by a group of people with a strong belief in the power of community libraries and in the library's fundamental role in facilitating the free flow and exchange of ideas and information to support democracy community wellbeing. And it all began with a scholarship.

The Library Books for Timor-Leste (LBTL) project began in 2003, born of a desire to assist the development of Timor-Leste's libraries and triggered by the awarding of the State Library of Victoria's Margery C Ramsay Scholarship in 2003 to the author for the purpose of undertaking a library study tour of Timor-Leste's libraries in 2004.

LBTL works in partnership with Timorese and Australian groups and organizations to support a range of library development needs including collection development, programs and training and development. The group's

primary activities are fundraising and awareness raising, with

continued support of training and development, the Xanana Gusmao Reading Room Building Restoration Project and the very new Biblioteka Ermera.

Libraries supported to date include Xanana Gusmao Reading Room, Manatuto Library, Haburas Moris Library on Atauro Island, UNTL Timor's National University Library in Dili, Lolotoe Junior High School and Community Library, Baucau Public Library, Baucau Friendship and Learning Centre, Friends of Same Schools Literacy Project, and the Dili Institute of Technology Library.

LBTL has also supported Timor-Leste's first ever Library Association - Asosiasaun Biblioteka no Informasaun Timor-Leste (ABITL) and, more recently, training and development programs for library staff from across the country including supporting 25 students to complete Certificate II in Library Studies.

The latest training program organised by ABITL was held in June 2010. Trainers were Palmira Pires from the ETDA Training Centre, Margaretta Evy de Silva from the Dili Institute of Technology and Venceslao Rego from the National University (UNTL) Library. 22 participants from the six district areas of Aileu, Baucau, Dili, Ermera, Los

Palos and Suai attended and completed the course. Topics covered included introduction to libraries, collection development, cataloguing and library systems. Palmira Pires and other members of ABITL are currently developing a Certificate IV in Library Studies Program.

With the recent announcement of support to build a National Library for Timor-Leste comes equally exciting news of the engagement of Karen Myers (formerly from the Victorian public library sector and Timor-Leste Projects including the UNTL National University Library Project and Centre for Truth and Reconciliation Project) to provide library expertise and input to the architectural brief, collection development,

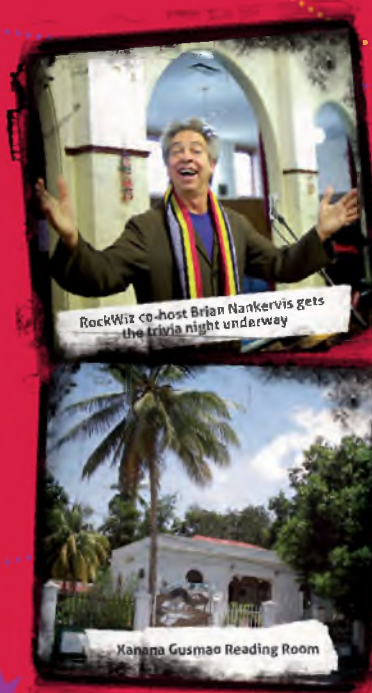
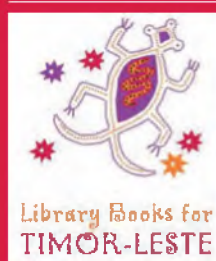
policy and recruitment. LBTL is exploring ways of supporting this project including assistance with collection development.

Meanwhile, Biblioteka Ermera has commenced building the first ever purpose-built library for the District of Ermera, home to 120,000 people. This facility will replace a library service operating out of the Gleno Youth Centre. In its first few months of operation Biblioteka Ermera is already a great success, attracting huge numbers through its doors, particularly for writing workshops, children's storytime and literacy programs. LBTL is currently supporting the development of the library collection.

Planning is now underway for a Library Study Tour of Timor-Leste. It will be led by the author and is proposed to take place late September 2011.

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over \$105,000 raised to date. Partners in Victoria have included the State Library of Victoria, Public Libraries Victoria

Network, Friends of Same, Viqueque and a host of sponsors. We have also partnered with Queensland Supporting Timor Leste Libraries (QSTILL) to provide funding assistance to the Xanana Gusmao Reading Room.

The most recent LBTL fundraising event was a major Trivia Night held last October. 350 supporters filled the Geelong West Town Hall, had a terrific evening and helped raise over \$29,000. Melbourne-based writer, comedian, and co-host of SBS hit show RockWiz, Brian Nankervis, was MC Extraordinaire, joined by a host of special guest trivia masters. One of the first people to book two tables was Theresa Jude of Logan City Libraries, who flew in all the way from Queensland to support the cause.

Other fundraising activities have included public lectures and appearances by Kirsty Sword Gusmao (Founding Director and Patron Xanana Gusmao Reading Room and Goodwill Ambassador for Education Timor-Leste) and former Premier of Victoria Steve Bracks who is also current Advisor to the Prime Minister of Timor-Leste.

Priority areas for this latest round of fundraising are