

# Ba Ami Nia Belun Sira

Newsletter for Friends and Benefactors



## Mary MacKillop Institute of East Timorese Studies

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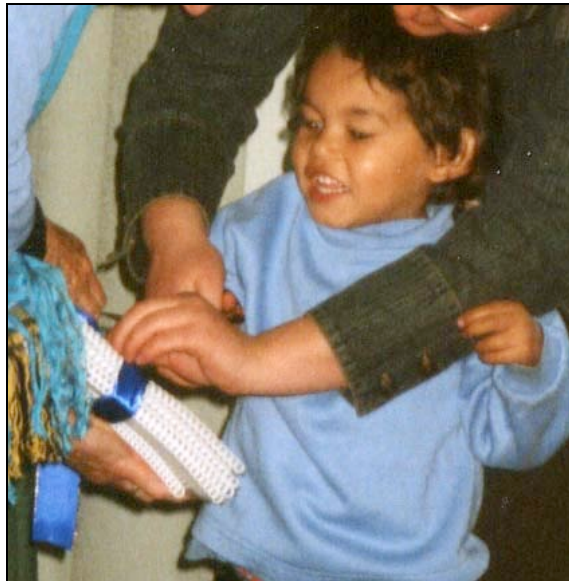
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[www.mmiets.org.au](http://www.mmiets.org.au)

## CELEBRATING TEN YEARS

Mary MacKillop's feastday this year brought double joy. Besides being the special day when we remember a most remarkable and far-sighted woman, it was also the day to celebrate the 10<sup>th</sup> year of the existence of the Mary MacKillop Institute of East Timorese Studies.

With great gratitude to God and to all those who have assisted over the years, friends of the Institute gathered at Mount Street, North Sydney, to recognise our deep links with the Timorese people and to salute their local languages. The occasion allowed us all to reflect on the events of the last few years and to acknowledge the great struggle of the Timorese people for national and cultural freedom, and to ponder with them their amazing success.



### What is the relationship between language and identity.....?

The partnership of the Mary MacKillop Institute with the Timorese people has specific focuses, and the 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary was an opportunity to mark two further steps in the journey. The first was the launching of the Kindergarten Program, which aims to give school starters and their teachers access to literacy materials and training. The importance of first becoming literate in the language of the home cannot be over-estimated. Experience the world over shows that children who learn to read in the mother tongue achieve greater success than those who are made to learn in a foreign language. Once basic literacy is

achieved, then children are able to grasp other languages with relative ease. The success experienced when learning in a familiar language flows over to other subjects and so helps children to achieve. It is encouraging to know that East Timorese children will have five hours tuition in Tetun per day until Grade Four. We hope that our Kindergarten programme and the teacher training that goes with it will be a valuable contribution to the huge educational challenges which the Timorese people face.

The second activity was the launching of our website, [www.mmiets.org.au](http://www.mmiets.org.au) Mr Nathan Turner is our webmaster and displayed the site to the audience. It is of great

benefit to schools and other bodies interested in our work. We would like to pay special tribute to the Leaders of the Sisters of St Joseph, both present and past, including Sister Mary Cresp, whose insight enabled the establishment of the Institute in 1994. We sincerely thank all donors and all staff. We thank and congratulate the Leaders of the other Religious Congregations which are part of the Institute, the Daughters of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart and the Little Company of Mary.



# Education

The Tetun Literacy Programme is the main work of the Mary MacKillop Institute. In the ten years we have produced a complete literacy program for Grades K-4, with teachers' manuals, support documents, dictionaries and resources.



*Teachers at literacy workshops*

There are other important related works which the members of the Institute have undertaken.

## Further Education

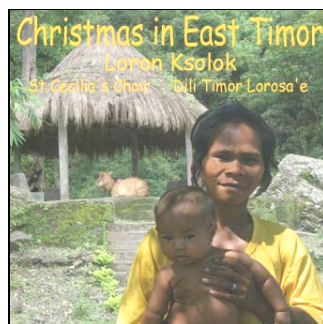


*Students learning welding at Don Bosco Training College*

The Mary MacKillop Institute supports East Timorese people to pursue further education and training, mainly in East Timor itself. The *Buka Matenek* Program assists University and trade school students with fees and living expenses.

## Musical Education

The Institute helps individuals and groups in their musical development. The Institute has had a long association with *St Cecilia's Choir*.



We have published a CD of their traditional songs and are in the process of producing a CD called *Christmas in East Timor* which will retail for \$20. The proceeds will go to the members of the choir.

## Religious Education Resources

The Institute works with the Diocese of Dili to provide religious education resources for parishes and catechists.



*Religious resources in great demand*

## Community Health Education and Resources

The Mary MacKillop Institute encourages and supports community health initiatives. It helps to design, develop, publish, distribute and help implement Tetun Community Health books and resources for the basic instruction and information of the East Timorese people and their communities.



*One of our friends outside his house*



*Old people needing assistance*

# Justice Issues

## Compassionate Care

The members of the Mary MacKillop Institute respond with compassion to the immediate needs of East Timorese people with whom they come in contact, e.g. old people in poor circumstances & school nutrition programmes. We assist with some school fees because many teachers depend on fees for their livelihood.

**“Your friends will not forget you.”**

One of the dearest associations Australia has with East Timor concerns the Second World War.

About 300 Australian soldiers were sent onto Timor in 1941 to resist any attempt by the Japanese to make Timor a final landing place from which to invade Australia. Timor was at the time a colony of neutral Portugal. Commandos from the 2/2 and 2/4 Divisions spent a year with the Timorese people, finding them willing guides and helpers, who were happy to nurse them, feed them and shelter them.



*Australian soldiers and their criados. Second from the left is Rufino, and on his right his great friend Tom Nisbet*

Realising that the Australians were on Timor, the Japanese then also came. The Australians had the services of *criados*, young Timorese men who risked their lives alerting the soldiers to Japanese positions. Long-lasting friendships were struck between the *criados* and the Commandos. When the order came for the Australians to leave early in 1943, leaflets were dropped all over Timor which said, “Your friends will not forget you.”

## Justice Education

MMIETS members help to educate a wide range of groups and individuals about East Timorese issues in order to raise awareness of the needs, and to enlist support for just outcomes. A current area of concern is the fair sharing of the resources of the Timor Sea.

Australian soldiers tell the story to this day, some without being able to finish. When the ship drew away from the shore and they saw their *criados* on the beaches, they felt it was the worst day of their lives, because they knew who would be waiting for the Timorese boys as they began the walk back to their villages.

The number of Timorese killed by the Japanese in revenge attacks are estimated to be around 40,000.

A few of the *criados* remain in East Timor, and one of them is well known to us. His name is Rufino Alves Correia.



*Rufino Alves Correia 2004*

We are attempting to get his story written, so that it can be told and retold, not only in East Timor, but to the young people of Australia.



*Dawn Service, Dili, April 25, 2003*

# Some memories of the last ten years....

## The Santa Cruz Masses

We remember the Santa Cruz Massacre Masses held in St Mary's Cathedral annually from 1991 until East Timor's Independence. Many people attended these Masses in solidarity with the Timorese whose hearts were so sorrowful and whose prospects were so bleak. Hope amid seeming hopelessness was found in the mystery and ritual of the Mass. At the conclusion we joined many other groups in marches through the streets of Sydney in public displays of opposition to the policies which kept the Timorese people bound. These are precious memories indeed.

## The Fall of Suharto

The day President Suharto fell from office in May, 1998, we toasted the event in our crowded kitchen with cake and champagne. A bewildered serviceman was fixing our refrigerator and at a strategic moment something in the 'fridge exploded, a fitting tribute on such an occasion. Footage of Suharto voting in the recent Indonesian Presidential elections brought back memories of the refrigerator episode. Suharto was responsible for hundreds of thousands of deaths of Indonesians, as well as 200,000 Timorese. Perhaps justice may one day be done.

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To be given the chance to learn  
to read in one's mother tongue is a  
fundamental human right

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## Asylum Seekers

The East Timorese asylum seekers have a story all their own. At one time there were about 1600 of them Australia-wide, all of whom had escaped from oppression. Many others had come from Timor for similar reasons and had been granted permanent residency, but changes in policy in the early 1990's resulted in the asylum seekers being denied this status. An example of the arbitrary nature of these decisions is shown in the denial of permanent residency to a man whose brother was accepted just 18 months before, even though the two had almost identical experiences. Happily, 85% of East Timorese asylum seekers are now permanent residents, thanks to letter writers and petition signers. We still wait and hope for the remaining 15%.

## Children Reading

There is a community centre in Railaku for children who don't go to school to which school children come in the afternoon. All they want to do all day is to read the Tetun books. One of the books that is almost worn out is Class 1 Book 9 La'o Lemo Rai ho Ha'u". (Travel Around With Me). On page 8 is the sentence: "*Mai ho ha'u bá Railaku haree ema ku'u kafé.*" (Come with me to Railaku and see the man picking coffee.) A man connected to the centre said that the book was "the most famous book in Timor" because the children read it over and over again until it was ragged. The children were proud that their home was mentioned and it made them so happy. They could identify with the content because it made sense to them.

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## DONATIONS / SUBSCRIPTION TO NEWSLETTER

TITLE (Mr, Mrs, Miss, Ms.).....FIRST NAME/INITIAL.....

SURNAME.....ADDRESS.....

.....POSTCODE.....

I wish to donate reading books to children in East Timorese schools \$.....

I wish to subscribe to "Ba Ami Nia Belun Sira" @ \$5.00 per year \$.....

I wish to contribute to the work of the Institute  
by making a donation. I enclose cheque / money order: \$ .....

(Make out to *Mary MacKillop Institute of East Timorese Studies*)

I wish to claim tax deductibility: Yes  No

Please return this form to: **Mary MacKillop Institute of East Timorese Studies PO Box 299 St Marys 1790**