

ADDRESS BY
HIS HONOUR MR TOM PAULING AO QC
ADMINISTRATOR OF THE NORTHERN TERRITORY
ON THE OCCASION OF
**RECEPTION AS PATRON OF THE
HUSI BEI ALA TIMOR SIRA NIA LIMAN -
FROM THE HANDS OF OUR ANCESTORS EXHIBITION**

Government House, Darwin

20 November 2008

And a warm welcome to all, especially our friends from Timor-Leste, it is a pleasure to see you here at Government House. I acknowledge the Larrakia people and their ancestors, traditional owners of the land on which this house stands.

It is very rewarding to be associated with the Exhibition *Husi Bei Ala Timor Sira Nia Liman – From the Hands of Our Ancestors*.

For the first time since Timor-Leste's restoration of independence on 20 May 2002, works from the National Collection of Timor-Leste are being internationally presented. This has been made possible due to the Government of the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste entrusting works from their National Collection to our Museum for the Exhibition's duration.

I extend my thanks to the National Directorate of Culture for entrusting us with your highly valuable and significant collection.

I am sure the people of the Northern Territory will be impressed by the beauty and majesty of these artworks.

The Exhibition exemplifies the relationship that exists between the peoples of the Northern Territory and Timor-Leste. As members of a regional community, we understand the benefits of exchange, reciprocity and partnership.

This Exhibition is an initial step towards the long-term goal of the National Directorate to establish a national cultural institution dedicated to the preservation, research and display of the country's cultural heritage. It will also foster a deeper understanding by the people of Australia about our near neighbour.

The relationship between us was perfectly expressed by the response of the Museum in late 1999, and early 2000, when a team of staff was sent to Dili to help retrieve damaged artworks, relics and artefacts from the former Provincial Museum of East Timor. These irreplaceable objects had been damaged during the militia inspired violence in Dili at that time.

Five hundred out of a total of eighteen hundred objects were salvaged and today these five hundred form the basis of the National Collection of Timor-Leste.

These initiatives characterise the dynamic relations between the Northern Territory and Timor-Leste which include other examples

such as this year's Darwin Festival. The Cantar Timor Choral Exchange proved an outstanding success when singers from Coro Santa Cecilia de Balide and the Motael Church of Dili gave an inspirational performance that Tessa and I enjoyed immensely.

The following month, in September, the Timor-Leste under-18 boy's soccer team won the inaugural Timor Sea Cup, a noteworthy achievement even though this was at our expense! With the tenth Arafura Games due to be held in May 2009 and the continuing close relationship of the sister cities project, our close associations are bound to continue and flourish.

Positive interpersonal relationships are central to innovative regional engagements.

Through the 2007 inaugural AusAID *Australian Leadership Awards Fellowship Program*, the Museum hosted three staff from the National Directorate of Culture, Timor-Leste. This important AusAID assistance has enabled critical capacity building in terms of museum practice and has resulted in laying a solid working foundation between the parties, which in turn has produced this exciting Exhibition.

ConocoPhillips Australia and ConocoPhillips Timor-Leste jointly supported the publication of a beautiful 180 page tri-lingual catalogue which will ensure the longevity of this exhibition. The catalogue is the initial step in an important process of documenting

and making publicly accessible their distinguished arts cultures within Timor-Leste and internationally. I congratulate ConocoPhillips on their foresight in supporting this initiative in such a meaningful manner.

I would also make mention of Air North whose generosity contributed to fostering the partnership by literally bridging the gap between the two countries. Thanks are also due to Darwin's Timorese community who have supported the Exhibition's development and to the private collectors and institutions who have generously lent works for inclusion. Last but absolutely not least - congratulations to the staff involved for all their industrious efforts.

It is my hope that *Husi Bei Ala Timor Sira Nia Liman – From the Hands of Our Ancestors* will provoke reflection, consideration and support for the National Directorate of Culture, Timor-Leste, as it strives to preserve the nation's material cultural heritage for future generations and the unique identity of our region.

I look forward to tomorrow night when we will share the privilege of seeing the Exhibition.

Thank you.