

ITEM NO: 7

SUBJECT: BLUE MOUNTAINS EAST TIMOR FRIENDSHIP COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT YTD 2011-12

FILE NO: F01154 - 12/46765

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**Delivery Program Link**

*Principal Activity:* Civic Leadership - Providing Good Government

*Service:* Governance

*Project:* Implement Civic responsibilities

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**Recommendations:**

1. *That the Council note the 2012-2013 budget for Blue Mountains East Timor Friendship Committee of \$11,400 which is currently contained in the 2012-13 Draft Delivery Plan that will be publicly exhibited in April/May 2012;*
  2. *That the Council note the invaluable contribution of Ms Jude Finch in consolidating and building a strong relationship between the Blue Mountains and the Hatobuilico Comite and community and acknowledges this contribution by the presentation of a "Certificate of Appreciation" to Ms Finch from the Blue Mountains East Timor Friendship Committee on behalf of the Council; and*
  3. *That the Council note the first NSW Timor-Leste Friendship Forum will be conducted on Saturday 14 July 2013 and offer Councillors the opportunity to attend and represent Blue Mountains City Council and support the efforts of the Blue Mountains East Timor Friendship Committee .*
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**Report by General Manager:****Reason for report**

The purpose of this report is to inform the Council about the activities of the Blue Mountains Timor-Leste Friendship Committee (BMETFC) during 2011 and the first part of 2012.

During this period BMETFC have successfully supported numerous projects in the Hatobuilico region as well as attracted other financial and physical support from a number of community development organisations, for example, the Trek for Timor held in the Blue Mountains in September 2010. The BMETFC with this support contributed to successful outcomes on various activities within the region.

The BMETFC is also requesting a continued budget allocation for 2012 of \$11400 and notifying the Council of the first NSW Timor-Leste Friendship Forum to be held in Western Sydney.

**Background**

The BMETFC was established by unanimous decision of Blue Mountains City Council at its January 2005 meeting. It adopted the subdistrict of Hatobuilico as its partner community following a recommendation by the then Consul General of Timor-Leste, Senhor Abel Guterres.

Friendship relationships such as the one between the Blue Mountains and Hatobuilico are an extremely important process for providing support for the development efforts of the people of Timor-Leste.

A formal agreement was signed in November 2007, between BMCC and the District Administrator for Hatobuilico, which forms the basis of our ongoing relationship.

Hatobuilico sub-district is comprised of three villages and twenty-one sub-villages. It is in the district of Ainaro in the mountainous centre of Timor-Leste, 100km south of Dili. Hatobuilico is situated at the foot of Mount Ramelau, Timor-Leste's highest mountain.

In July 2007, members of the BMETFC met with Hatobuilico community members who formed a local committee, (HB Comite). In September 2007, with the assistance of Beba Sequeira, the HB Comite developed a Strategic Plan.

In April 2008, the BMETFC developed its own Strategic Plan in response to the priorities identified in the HB Comite Plan. Each year since then, this plan has been updated in response to recommendations from the HB Comite and BMETFC members who have visited the area. The funding allocation from the Council was increased from \$6,000 to \$11,400 in recognition of the requirements of the region.

#### **Developments since June 2011**

Jude Finch, a member of the BMETFC has been based in Dili since March 2011 as a volunteer under Australian Volunteer International (AVI) program with Asia Pacific Support Collective - Timor-Leste (APSC-TL). APSC-TL is a national NGO working on women's issues, including violence prevention and they have assisted the Hatobuilico Friendship relationship by providing liaison between the Hatobuilico community and BMETFC. As part of her role, Ms Finch has spent half her time in Hatobuilico, assisting with the development of the friendship relationship and undertaking general community development.

Having Ms Finch based in Timor-Leste has been invaluable in progressing the relationship between this community and BMETFC as she has been able to visit regularly, getting to know people, working alongside them and developing trust, establishing systems and identifying the needs of the community. Ms Finch has provided BMETFC with regular detailed reports of the challenges and achievements which she has been involved in over the last year.

#### **Activities in 2011-12**

During the last year, the HB Comite (a Timor-Leste committee) has had two areas of work. The first is the management of the direct Comite programs the most substantial of this being the scholarship program. The second was utilising funds raised in the Blue Mountains from the Trek for Timor event in 2010.

In relation to the latter, Ms Finch worked with the HB Comite to organise a community planning workshop in July 2011, which was also attended by Ms Mary Waterford and Mr John Telford as representatives of BMETFC. Over 50 participants in the workshop came from the subdistrict. The workshop participants were judged to have a good balance of ages and gender.

The workshop focussed on identifying new major projects which would benefit the whole community, not surprisingly, education was rated with the highest priority. It was agreed that Trek for Timor funds would be used to fund the following projects:

1. Establishment of a non-formal Adult Learning Centre which would offer training in many areas and be staffed by a Co-ordinator and an Administrator; and

2. Establishment of a senior secondary school in Hatobuilico.

Both of these streams of work are outlined in more detail.

#### Adult Learning Centre

Since the workshop Ms Finch has continued to work with Senor Domingos to manage the early development of the adult learning centre which has utilised the existing Community Centre building. Located in the heart of Hatobuilico vila, the building has become a community hub. The work has included the recruitment of two local residents as centre staff, Mr Allau Amaral as Co-ordinator and Mr Leonardo Fernandes as Administrator who both started work in October 2011

Programs are being offered from the community centre and other outreach sites in the sub-district including English, agriculture, organic farming, computer training and programs for women and children. Though largely reliant on Trek for Timor funding, the program already has attracted funds from other international and local sources.

The Bright Rotary Club sent a team to work with community members to upgrade the Community Centre building. This substantial renovation has meant that a poorly lit and sub-standard building can now be utilised as a bright, clean and effective training space with a secure office and storeroom.

#### Senior Secondary School

The secondary school opened with 37 students, operating from the existing pre-secondary school with a team of volunteer teachers.

The School committee estimates they will need an additional three classrooms but their construction has been deferred until next year and until further funds are raised. It is envisaged that funds raised by Trek for Timor 2012 will contribute significantly to the building of these new classrooms.

#### **Other ancillary projects**

Supported by BMETFC, the HB Comite is managing a set of small projects including the resourcing of a small school in Taurema; paying a stipend to the security guard and assistant at the local health post; building a safe waste disposal unit at the health post; securing the water source at the Hatobuilico Primary school; and, building a public toilet at the foot of Mount Ramelau.

Under the management of the HB Comite a tourism development strategy has been implemented. This strategy has included initiatives such as the development of a website, (hatobuilico.com), the training of local guides to work in the tourism industry, promotional material aimed at potential tourists and appropriate tourism signage for local walking tracks and services.

The Hatobuilico community have identified that improving access to education and enhancing tourism are the two strategies that will produce the best outcomes for the community.

#### **Scholarship Program**

The 2012 Scholarship program that supports young people from Hatobuilico to attend University and Secondary school has been extensively modified in terms of criteria for approval and expectations of the students. Over 110 applications were received from across the three suks of the sub-district.

The HB Comite invested considerable time ensuring that the process was fair and equitable and that students receiving scholarships were aware of their responsibilities to return to their community when their studies were completed to make a contribution to the community. Following a rigorous process, 64 students were awarded scholarships. This means that 64 young people will be able to access higher education that otherwise would not have had an opportunity to enter the salaried workforce or to contribute to the development of this very new and struggling nation.

**BMETFC 2011-2012 financial responsibilities**

All committee members are committed to ensuring that the Council budget is managed in a responsible and accountable manner. A brief summary of the year’s expenditure is listed below.

Purchase and supply of equipment for the HB Comite and local events	\$1 292
Travel expenses within Timor-Leste for BMETFC members*	\$1 088
Hatobuilico scholarships	\$3 918
Establishment of the office for the HB Comite to work from	\$1 521
HB Comite financial support for administration	\$2 278
Local stationery and office expenses, (laminating a poster)	\$14
BMCC administration costs	\$558
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$10672</b>
<b>Remaining funds</b>	<b>\$728</b>

Note: All international travel and overseas living expenses are self funded by BMETFC members.

**Timor-Leste Friendship Forum 2012**

The first NSW Timor-Leste Friendship Forum will be hosted by UWS on July 14<sup>th</sup> 2012. The purpose of the Forum is to promote the benefits of Friendship Committees and share strategies for implementing successful Community Development in Timor-Leste.

The initial plans for the Forum includes the theme of Education with presentations from AusAid and noted academic Damien Kingsbury on best practices for implementing Community Development projects in Timor-Leste. The Forum will be opened by Kirsty Sword Gusmao, former First Lady of Timor-Leste, Goodwill Ambassador for Education and Director of Alola Foundation and closed by Abel Guterres, Timor-Lesteese Ambassador to Australia. The Forum also has the support of the Consul General of Timor-Leste in NSW Maria de Jesus who is on the working party with BMETS, UWS & BMTLFC.

Importantly, it is noted that Jude Finch, member of BMETFC and Australian Volunteer International will be giving a presentation about her recent experience working in Timor-Leste in Dili and Hatobuilico.

Blue Mountains Timor-Leste Sisters (BMETS) and Deacon University (Vic) have already endorsed the Forum and the host, UWS, has committed over \$6,000 of in-kind support to ensure that Forum will be successful. It is also noted that there are over 50 ‘friendship’ relationships between Australian Local Councils and communities in Timor-Leste and that some of these Local Councils have already indicated they will be supporting the Forum.

BMETFC recommends that the Council supports this Forum by Councillor attendance as delegates at the Forum to represent BMCC and support BMETFC.

**Sustainability Assessment**

<b>Effects</b>	<b>Positive</b>	<b>Negative</b>
Environmental	Nil	Nil
Social	<p>The Council is supporting the development of long term relationships between the Hatobuilico community and our own.</p> <p>Money spent by the BMETFC is also carefully and strategically directed towards projects which will have be greatest positive outcomes in the community in terms of providing physical resources for by the community to use, development of a sustainable tourism industry and education of secondary and tertiary students and.</p>	Nil
Economic	Nil	Nil
Governance	In accordance with the Council's adopted policies, the operation of the Committee is being conducted in a transparent manner particularly with regard to spending the approved budget.	Nil

**Financial implications for the Council**

The budget for 2012-2013, if approved following public exhibition, will ensure that the projects currently supported by BMETFC will continue to be implemented to successful outcomes and provide significant benefits for the Hatobuilico community in Timor-Leste.

**Legal and risk management issues for the Council**

Nil

**External consultation**

Anne McKenzie visited Hatobuilico in October 2011 to assist with training at the Community Centre.

Mary Waterford visited in December 2011 to attend the celebration event for the launch of Secondary School classes.

**Conclusion**

The BMETFC is pleased to report that the last year has seen considerable progress. While the advent of the Trek for Timor funding has allowed for an expansion in the projects under development BMETFC acknowledges the important core contribution made to the program by Council, especially for the important scholarship program.

With the support of a renewed budget of \$11,400, Committee members look forward to continuing to work with the Hatobuilico community and represent Blue Mountains City Council in Timor-Leste in 2012 and 2013.

The work and achievement done by Ms Finch is noteworthy and deserving of a Certificate of Appreciation from BMETFC on behalf of the Council.

The first NSW Timor-Leste Friendship Forum to be held at UWS is also proposed to have two Councillors present to indicate the Council's support for this important community development event for Timor-Leste.

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Robert Greenwood, General Manager

**Does this paper need to go to a briefing session OR have Ward Councillors been briefed?:** No

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