

ITEM NO: 8

SUBJECT: BLUE MOUNTAINS EAST TIMOR FRIENDSHIP COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT

FILE NO: F01154 - 13/106175

Delivery Program Link

Principal Activity: Civic Leadership

Service: Governance and Risk

Recommendations:

1. *That the Council acknowledges the achievements of the Blue Mountains East Timor Friendship Committee (BMETFC) 2012-2013;*
 2. *That the Council approves the payment of USD\$8000 scholarships to the Hatobuilico Comite in two instalments of USD\$4000 in July 2013 and January 2014;*
 3. *That the Council approves the payment of the international airfare for the East Timorese Vice-Minister of Education, Dulcie Soares up to a value of AU\$1200;*
 4. *That the Council endorses the travel plans for BMETFC committee member, Mary Waterford as she will be representing BMETFC while in East Timor, approves the payment of AUD\$300 for registration fees for the Understanding Timor Leste conference and approves additional reimbursement of up to AUD\$600 for BMETFC related projects;*
 5. *That the Council acknowledges the contributions of the members of the BMETFC for the period 2012-2013: John Telford (Chair), Maggi Williams, Elaine Telford, Wendy Whitton, Jude Finch, Mary Waterford, Carol Cooper, Jasmine Payget, Councillor Romola Hollywood, Councillor Don McGregor and Sally Thompson, (staff representative);*
 6. *That the Council welcomes and endorses the new committee members John Tweedie, Jason Clarke, David Ludenia and Pam Nash; and*
 7. *That the Blue Mountains East Timor Friendship Committee Terms of Reference be reviewed within the next 12 months.*
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Report by Group Manager, People and Systems:**Reason for report**

The purpose of this report is to inform the Council about the following issues:

- To acknowledge the contribution of the BMETFC members for the 2012-2013 period;
- Specific achievements and outcomes of the Committee delegation which travelled to East Timor during May 2013;
- To notify the Council of the impending Committee delegation in July 2013 and to approve expenditure of up to AUD\$600 while in East Timor;
- To approve the payment of Conference registration fees of AUD\$300 for Mary Waterford;
- To approve the payment of the international airfare for the East Timorese Vice-Minister for Education of up to \$1200; and

- To notify the Council that a review of the BMETFC Terms of Reference will occur within the next 12 months.

Background

The BMETFC was established by resolution of the Blue Mountains City Council at the Ordinary Meeting held on 25 January 2005, Minute 6. It adopted the subdistrict of Hatobuilico as its partner community following a recommendation by the then Consul General of Timor-Leste, Senor 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 the Council 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.

The synchronicity between the strategic plans developed by the Hatobuilico Comite and BMETFC have resulted in numerous successful short and long term projects which have a primary focus on education and health outcomes. The quantity and degree of these outcomes has been vastly increased by the funds raised by the Trek for Timor events in 2010 and 2012.

BMETFC Achievements in 2012-2013**Scholarships**

Scholarships were paid to the HB Comite who have used USD\$8000 to support the education of 60 students during 2012-2013. This includes primary, secondary and tertiary students who satisfy certain criteria which have been established by the Hatobuilico Comite.

Trek for Timor 2012 Fundraising Event

The second Trek for Timor event, which was jointly organised by the BMETFC and BMETS on 15 September 2012, raised over \$90,000 to be used for education and health projects in East Timor. The BMETFC was instrumental in ensuring that the event was extremely successful and continues to play an important role in managing the allocation of funds raised and managing the roll out of projects.

Strategic Planning Day 10 February 2013

A Strategic Planning Day was held with the professional assistance of Facilitator Tom Schwarz. The outcomes of the planning day included:

- Consideration that the aims, objectives, actions and projects of the BMETFC continue to comply with the United Nations definition of Community Development;

- Consideration of strategies which may be used to combat the challenges of community development in East Timor, such as language, difficulties travelling to rural communities review of the BMETFC budget and determination that the best value is being achieved by supporting the existing programs;
- Review of the projects developed through funds raised by Trek for Timor 2010; and
- Consideration of projects which may be supported by funds raised in Trek for Timor 2012.

Walking Tour May 2013

Though not directly a BMETFC initiative, nine (9) local Blue Mountains residents travelled to East Timor in May 2013 to undertake a series of walks in the mountains surrounding Hatobuilico, following the trails mapped by previous volunteers, Anne McKenzie and Fiona Christian in 2010, and progressing tourism development work carried out by Jude Finch in 2011-2012. The group also visited local schools and learned about East Timor. The Participants were inspired by travelling to East Timor and two participants have joined the BMETFC as a result.

Hatobuilico Comite activities

The Hatobuilico Comite has continued to support the operation of the Community Centre and the Adult Learning Centre, including two salaried positions for the Coordinator and Administration Assistant. Some of the activities which are provided for the Hatobuilico community in the Adult Learning Centre include, English classes, computer classes and training in agriculture. The community centre is also used for other community activities including community meetings and women's groups.

Hatobuilico Secondary School development and operation

The Hatobuilico Secondary School has been established for 18 months and is being operated from the Pre-Secondary School premises. It does not yet have permanent accommodation. There are 47 students and over 10 volunteer teachers, (many of whom are paid teachers at the Hatobuilico Primary School). Enrolled students participate in a range of classes set by the national curriculum.

The Secondary School was visited by John Telford and Jude Finch in October 2012 and also in May 2013 by Jude Finch with the walking group. On both visits BMETFC members were able to review the progress and activities at the school and are confident that the school is progressing well. The school has presented a proposal for funding assistance that is being considered by the Trek for Timor finding allocations committee. A decision has been made at the June BMETFC meetings to provide funding from Trek for Timor to support teacher salaries in the short term while investigations are made about the feasibility of supporting the building of a school.

Taureme School

The Taureme School has been strongly supported by the BMETFC for 3 years now. This is a small community run primary level school which receives no other funding from the East Timorese Government. It operates from a very basic small building that the community has great difficulty maintaining. Wind storms have destroyed the building each February in the last two years. The school has always been operated by local volunteer teachers, which demonstrates the commitment of the community to providing education opportunities to their children.

Funds raised by Trek for Timor 2012 (up to a value of \$45,000) are intended to fund the construction of a new 3 room school building for Taureme. This will be a significant contribution to a very needy and isolated community.

Jude Finch visited the Taureme School to inspect the damage to the school building which occurred in a severe storm in May 2013 together with the participants of the walking group who were able to interact with the students and community. At this time the community had performed repairs to the building and regular classes were being taught.

Hatobuilico Primary School

The Hatobuilico Primary School continues to operate under the support of the Hatobuilico Comite. Many students at this school receive scholarships from the BMETFC.

AVI position

The BMETFC has worked with Australian Volunteers International to develop a dedicated position to work in the Hatobuilico community. This position has been advertised several of times, however, AVI have not been able to recruit a suitable person for this role. AVI and BMETFC are considering a modified position which would allow the person to be able to work in both Dili and Hatobuilico so that they would not be wholly located in an isolated community during the tenure.

Activities and projects proposed for 2013-2014

Scholarship Program

BMETFC intends to continue to support the scholarships program for Hatobuilico. The annual value of the scholarship program is proposed to be USD\$8000 to be paid in 2 installments of USD\$4000 in July 2013 and January 2014.

Visit from East Timorese Vice-Minister for Education in July 2013.

The Vice-Minister for Education, Dulcie Soares will be visiting Australia in July 2013 to liaise with key Australian groups who support a number of education projects in East Timor, including BMETFC and the Blue Mountains East Timor Sisters. It is proposed to support this visit by paying for the cost of the international airfare for the Vice-Minister. BMETFC resolved to support the cost of the international airfare up a maximum value of AUD\$1200 at the committee meeting of 17 June 2013. (It is noted that other key groups meeting with the Vice-Minister will also support the trip by paying for accommodation and travel within Australia.)

BMETFC Members travelling to East Timor in July 2013

Ms Mary Waterford, a member of the BMETFC, will be travelling to East Timor, on 9 July 2013 for a period of 15 days.

Ms Waterfords' travel plans include meeting with Hatobuilico Comite members and AusAid on behalf of BMETFC. She will also be attending the Understanding Timor Leste Conference on 15-16 July 2013 and travelling to visit the Taurema School in the Hatobuilico subdistrict where the BMETFC intends to support necessary repairs to the school building.

While representing the committee, it is likely that they will incur BMETFC related expenses. Such expenses may include transport to Hatobuilico, materials and equipment for the Hatobuilico Comite and/or minor repairs to Comite buildings. At the BMETFC meeting of 17 June 2013, members endorsed such expenditure up to a value of AUD\$600. The Council is requested to approve such expenses up to the value of AUD\$600 (reimbursable upon return to Australia and presentation of suitable evidence of actual expenditure). It is noted that the cost of the Conference registration of AUD\$300 will be paid from the 2012-2013 budget.

Sustainability Assessment

Effects	Positive	Negative
Environmental	Nil	Nil
Social	The Council is supporting the development of long term relationships between the Hatobuilico community and our own. Money spent by the BMETFC is also carefully and strategically directed towards projects which will have the greatest value positive outcomes in the Hatobuilico community.	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 proposed expenditure of AUD\$300 for conference registration fees for Mary Waterford to attend the Understanding Timor Leste Conference on 15-16 July 2013 is to be paid from the existing 2012-2013 budget.

The proposed expenditure for 2013-2014, has been endorsed by the BMETFC and the Hatobuilico Comite to be supportive and consistent with existing, long-term education programs. The budget for 2013-2014 has been included in the Operational Delivery Program and it is anticipated funds will be allocated in the following manner:

- USD\$8000 for scholarships;
- AUD\$1200 for the international airfare for the East Timorese Vice-Minister for Education to travel to the Blue Mountains (carry-over project from the 2012-2013 remaining budget);
- AUD\$600 to support Mary Waterford as a BMETFC delegate in Hatobuilico in July 2013.

Legal and risk management issues for the Council

Nil

External consultation

The report has been prepared in response to endorsed motions of the committee and in consultation with BMETFC members.

Jude Finch, has spent considerable time in East Timor since 2011, including a 12 month position as an AVI in Dili and Hatobuilico and holds considerable knowledge about current and past projects, challenges of working in East Timor and strategies which need to be applied to make progress. Ms Finch has also built strong relationships with members of the Hatobuilico Comite and other key community members and is able to rely on these relationships to ensure that the best outcomes are achieved utilising BMETFC financial contributions. Ms Finch has particularly supported the primary school at Taureme that has been a long term project of the BMETFC.

John Telford is the Chair of the BMETFC and has travelled to East Timor many times. He has established strong relationships with individuals in the Hatobuilico Comite and education community and has participated in strategic workshops held in Hatobuilico where key community development projects were identified by the community.

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Conclusion

The BMETFC is pleased to report that the last year has seen considerable progress. Funds raised by the Trek for Timor events in 2010 and 2012 have allowed for an expansion in the BMETFC projects under development. BMETFC acknowledges the important core contribution made to the program by Council, especially for the important scholarship program. The members of BMETFC are committed to the ongoing education projects which are being funded by the Council and the Trek for Timor.

With the support of the BMETFC 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.

AUTHOR: Sally Thompson, Waste & Resources Engineer

AUTHORISERS: Jasmine Cooper, Acting Executive Officer
Stuart Liddell, Group Manager, People & Systems

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

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