



Australia-East Timor Association

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Life Members: **Helen Hill** OTL; **Jill Jolliffe** OTL; **Jean McLean** OTL; AM; **John Sinnott** OTL

ANNUAL REPORT

For year 1 January to 31 December 2024

Prepared for the 2025 Annual General Meeting
On-line by Zoom 6pm Wednesday 26 February 2024



**FRIDAY
3 MAY
7 PM**

METAC
MELBOURNE EAST TIMORESE ACTIVITY CENTRE

AETA and EISA – New students Welcome Dinner

A night to welcome new students from Timor-Leste as they embark on their academic journey and make Melbourne their new home away from home.

All welcome to join us over delicious Timorese food, great company of Timorese community members, friends, and supporters.

METAC acknowledges the traditional owners, The Wurundjeri-wilam people of the Kulin Nation on whose land we gather.

The Factory
19-12 Belgium Ave,
Richmond. 3121

Sponsored by:
Australia-East Timor Association



Tais, Culture & Resilience
WOVEN STORIES FROM TIMOR-LESTE

SYMPOSIUM Saturday 21st September 2024 | 1.00-5.00pm

TRINITY COLLEGE
AETA

INTRODUCTION TO AETA

The Australia-East Timor Association (AETA) was established in 1975, following occupation of East Timor by Indonesia, as an information, solidarity and networking organisation to support the struggle for independence of East Timor. Meetings and rallies were organised and a bookshop established for the distribution and sale of information material on East Timor.

East Timor achieved independence in 2002 after 24 years of occupation following a UN-supervised referendum in 1999. Independence for Timor Leste - the main goal of AETA - was achieved. Questions for AETA then arose – what then should be the focus and goals of AETA?

After consultation with AETA members and a strategic planning process, AETA continues as an information, networking and support organisation in solidarity with the people of Timor-Leste, the East Timorese and wider community in Australia.

AETA is an incorporated association, with the following objectives and mission:

- (a) AETA works in solidarity with the people of Timor-Leste and East Timorese community in Australia**
- (b) The Association provides advocacy and information about Timor-Leste to members and public.**
- (c) The Association supports specific projects in Timor-Leste and Australia.**

(From AETA Constitution – approved 14 August 2014)

The AETA Strategic Plan focuses on the development of information sharing and networking, a bookshop, seminars, support of knowledge networks and special interest groups, archives, history and commemoration, the Annual Dinner, creation of a website to facilitate information sharing, and membership regeneration. While AETA works mainly in Victoria, there is increasing interest in supporting related activities in other states.

AETA had 57 members registered on 31st Dec 2024 (c.f. 81 on 31st Dec 2023 and 60 on 31st Dec 2022).

AETA ACTIVITIES

A. Annual General Meeting (AGM) and Governance

1. Annual General Meeting

The AETA AGM was conducted on 21 February 2024 with 26 people participating online, including 21 current members.

2. Committee Members and Meetings

At the 2024 AGM two new committee members were elected: Aoife Carli-Hannan and Ash Siedlecki, both with strong links to Friends groups (Friends of Aileu and Friends of Vemasse). The AETA Committee has been relatively stable, with a number of members from the Timorese continuing on the committee over the last two years, with the addition of Jose Pires in 2024. Timorese membership strengthens AETA's links and collaboration with Timorese community organisations in Melbourne. Our hardworking committee has made this a very successful year.

AETA committee meetings have continued to be on-line, meeting regularly in the first week of every second month throughout the year, with additional meetings as required. Activities are organized through meetings of the Events sub-committee, the composition of which changes for each event. The 2024 AETA Committee comprised as follows:

Role	Name
Chairperson	Glenda Lasslett
Vice Chairperson	Jean McLean
Secretary	Ann Wigglesworth
Treasurer	Roger King
General Committee Members	Aoife Carli Hannan Ashley Siedlecki Bernardo Duarte Claire Woods David Lih Emanuel Braz (on leave in 2024) John Wallace Jose Pires (from June) Tony Marjoram
ETSA Representative	Lidio Guilhermino Sarmiento Ximenes (to July) Augusto Sarmiento (from August)
Founding Member, Life member	Jean McLean, OTL, AM

Ann Wigglesworth, Secretary AETA is registered with Consumer Affairs Victoria and is responsible for submitting AETA’s Annual Report.

3. AETA Strategic Plan

AETA is operating from the AETA STRATEGIC PLAN, July 2022-June 2026 (updated Feb 2023). Each year AETA Committee holds a planning session for the year to consider key activities for the year including the Independence Dinner and the Honouring the Struggle event.

4. AETA Chapters

Following discussions with several interstate groups about membership with AETA, guidelines have been developed for an AETA Chapter. The original version was approved in December 2023 but questions arose which were answered by revising the AETA Chapter Guidelines. These were finally approved at the Committee meeting on 4 September 2024. These guidelines will be sent to interstate groups focused on Timor-Leste and interested in affiliation with AETA.

5. AETA policy decision on political protests

Prior to the Pope’s visit to Timor-Leste, disturbing reports were circulating about families being evicted from their houses and their houses destroyed in preparation for the Pope’s visit. An AETA member proposed that AETA should be protesting to the Timorese government about this. The AETA Committee felt it should be bound by the following principles:

- AETA should not be tied to any particular political issue
- We share information about what is going on in Timor-Leste
- We may choose to seek further opinions from Timorese sources to share publicly.

B. AETA Events

1. Reflections on the lives of two AETA founding members

This year AETA committee members were deeply saddened by the deaths of two of the founding members of AETA, John Sinnott OTL and Dr Helen Hill OTL.

John Sinnott (4 May 1946 - 8 January 2024) died in a nursing home. His funeral on 31 January was extremely well attended by a large crowd of AETA members, Timorese and Australian activists and was a wonderful tribute to his life and work. Helen Hill spoke on behalf of AETA, and Konneng Lay from the Timorese community, amongst other family and friends.

Helen Hill returned to Melbourne for a Xmas visit in early December 2023. She held a small group discussion about education in Timor-Leste, followed by the Xmas drinks (as recorded last year). She stayed to undergo cancer treatment in Melbourne but after several months of treatment passed away on 7 May 2024. The funeral was held at the Church of All Nations in Fitzroy on 17 May. Helen's brother, Ian Hill, spoke as well as Hon Jean McLean OTL, AM who recounted about her long association with Helen nearly 50 years since their founding of AETA. The Hon. Dulce Soares, Minister for Education of Timor-Leste, came to Melbourne for the funeral and spoke about Helen's legacy for education in Timor-Leste. Steve Bracks noted Helen's impactful work at VU, Michael Leach, Balthazar Kehi, Roberto Martins and Carla Chung all spoke, amongst others.

A huge number of memories and tributes to Helen were sent from around the world, including from both the President and the Prime Minister of Timor-Leste and the Presidency of the Council of Ministers, the Australian Embassy in Dili and the Embassy of Timor-Leste in Canberra. A Mass in remembrance of Helen was held in Dili on 11 May and a Timorese Community gathering of remembrance took place on 18 May in Melbourne.

AETA contributed to the ***Bringing Helen Home Project*** organized by Timorese friends and colleagues of Helen in Dili, including Minister Dulce Soares, Ego Lemos, Alex Gusmão, Ismenio Martins amongst others. Helen's brother Ian and friend Jean McLean were invited to participate in the final ceremony to lay to rest the urn of her ashes there in September. A memorial for Helen was erected in Santa Cruz Cemetery, Dili.

AETA Committee has been deeply touched by the outpouring of love and respect for John and Helen. Tributes to John and Helen are on our website at <https://www.aeta.net.au/vale-john-sinnott/> and <https://www.aeta.net.au/obituary-dr-helen-mary-hill-ot-l/>

2. Student Welcome

In 2024 the Welcome to new Timorese students in Melbourne was held at the Melbourne East Timor Activities Centre (METAC) on 3 May, with six new Timorese students. This joint METAC-AETA event was hosted by Jose Pires with a financial contribution for food by AETA. We were delighted to hear songs by the Timorese Community Choir. It was a successful and enjoyable evening, with good networking opportunities for all.

3. AETA Restoration of Independence Day Dinner

The AETA dinner was held on 17 May at William Angliss Restaurant. The dinner happened to be scheduled for the same day as Helen Hill's funeral making it a more sombre occasion than usual. Jean gave a tribute to Helen on the night.

The main speaker was Prof. Lisa Palmer from Melbourne University who presented her 12-minute film, ***Lisan: the importance of culture in carbon forestry in Timor-Leste*** which was well received. Lisa was joined by Balthasar Kehi for the post-film discussion. Musicians Dulcyta Soares and Izu Pereira from Dili were in

Melbourne and we had the great pleasure of their lovely songs, one dedicated to Helen, at the end of the evening. Once again, the annual dinner proved to be a great time of networking and catching up for people in the many Timor-Leste related organisations in Victoria.

4. Honouring the Struggle

Timor-Leste 50 Years On: Are hope and history still rhyming? was the event held on 5 December with Pat Walsh as key speaker and Jon Faine as MC. Pat spoke informatively about major events affecting Timor-Leste in 2024, including the 50th anniversary of the Carnation Revolution in Portugal, the 25th anniversary of the 1999 Ballot for Independence, the Pope's visit to Timor-Leste and the swearing in of (war criminal) General Prabowo Subianto as President of Indonesia.

The event was successfully held at St Kilda South Port Uniting Church in St Kilda. AETA has been keen to find appropriate inexpensive venues and was pleased to have the opportunity to use this delightful venue. There were 53 people who booked for the event and 35 of them came to have dinner at a nearby pub afterwards.

Thanks to AETA member Desleigh Kent for assisting its organization and to Ashley Siedlecki for his assistance with the audio and recording systems.

C. Solidarity and Advocacy Events

1. West Papua

AETA met with David Bridie who has a project, *Hanorin Lian*, to work with Timorese musicians in Timor-Leste and Melbourne. He has been working on a similar project in West Papua and some Committee members attended his show at the Memo Music Hall and also the West Papua Film Festival at ACMI. AETA will support this project as it develops and will continue to publicize information and events related to West Papua through our Facebook page.

2. ETWA Exhibition and Symposium

In September, the East Timor Women's Association (ETWA) held an exhibition and symposium on Timorese Tais, Culture and Resistance. AETA contributed three framed posters to the exhibition (from 24 September to 10 December) and there was an AETA book stall on the day of the Symposium. Glenda, Claire, Ashley and Tony participated.

3. Timorese Students in Melbourne

AETA continues to focus on networking opportunities, including facilitating partnerships with other organisations, to broaden the opportunities and networks for the students. The ETSA President is invited to join the AETA committee. AETA provides a Welcome to Timorese Students (see above) and discounted/supported tickets to AETA events. In addition, we link ETSA to other organisations where relevant.

4. Timorese Seasonal Workers in Australia

AETA is committed to sharing information on workers' rights, facilitating access to support services to help workers in need, and advocating for better working conditions, where mistreatment of workers is identified or known.

A previous member of the AETA Committee, Carla Chung has resigned from the Committee but is now working with ACRATH and a liaison officer with Timorese and other seasonal workers.

Four AETA Committee members, Glenda, Ann, Ash and David, met with an officer from the Community Engagement Team, Department of Home Affairs that liaises with seasonal workers in Victoria. There is a lot

of interest in the well-being of Australia's Timorese guest workers, and AETA shares information when it becomes available, sharing our perspectives and connect the Community Engagement Team with relevant organisations.

AETA also received an invitation to join a new consultation forum by the Department of Home Affairs and the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT). In early 2025, the Department of Home Affairs and DFAT will establish a forum with key community leaders and organisations, with the aim of supporting the implementation of the Pacific Engagement Visa (PEV).

AETA continues to post related news and analysis of migrant worker issues and news on Facebook.

5. Partnership with Australian-Timorese Organisations

AETA is pleased to support METAC, sponsoring at least one METAC dinner each year. We also helped promote the Endeavour Soccer Club Hamutuk Festival. Congratulations to the Endeavour United Soccer Club and their committee for a very successful Hamutuk Festival 27 December to 4 January, featuring soccer, Timorese dance and music, culture workshops and great food. This event was a lead in to various forthcoming events for the 50th anniversary of the Timorese community in Melbourne in August 2025. AETA welcomed the revival of the Timorese Association of Victoria in 2024 and looks forward to working with them in 2025.

C. Communications

Our e-Newsletters and Facebook page continues to be a useful source of information and networking in both Australia and Timor-Leste, covering issues of development and justice in Timor-Leste, the situation of Timorese seasonal workers in Australia, the work of Friendship groups and other solidarity organisations and general news of what is happening in Timor-Leste.

1. eNewsletters

Nine email campaigns were sent to 520 members and supporters promoting amongst other events:

- the AGM
- Student Welcome at METAC
- Restoration of Independence Dinner
- ETWA symposium and exhibition
- Honouring the Struggle event with Pat Walsh and Jon Faine

Each campaign involved an email newsletter followed by two reminders. The campaigns were also posted on Facebook. These emails also carried important notices and stories of interest and are well received by our members and friends. Thanks to Roger King who manages the email newsletters.

2. Facebook

Facebook has changed dramatically in recent years. FB pages are saturated with ads which are of little value to our followers. FB attracts scammers and hackers and its algorithms encourage sensationalism and misinformation. It's rare for a post which is not boosted with a payment to FB to gain a significant reach. However, it is still widely used in Timor-Leste and it is still useful for getting important messages out to broad audiences in both Timor-Leste and Australia.

On 31st Dec 2024 AETA's Facebook page had 3,800 followers, up from 3,300 in 2023. Approximately 43% of AETA's Facebook audience is based in Timor-Leste, 43% in Australia, 5% in Indonesia, 3% in UK, 1.8% in Portugal and 1.4% in USA.

616 posts were created or shared, (c.f. 394 in 2023). Total reach was 14,100 (c.f. 19,200 in 2023). Content interactions (likes, shares, comments) were 580 (c.f. 3715 in 2021).

By far the most engaged posts related to Helen Hill's illness and subsequent death. Over 200 people expressed their concern and grief in comments on a FB post in May. Other prominent posts included

- a post celebrating OTM awards granted to people in the AETA network
- a review of the AETA dinner in May by the Australian Timor-Leste Friendship Network
- AETA promotions of its own events
- a brief review with photos of the AETA Honouring the Struggle event with Pat Walsh.

Posts by other organisations, such as Spend It Well's Two Birders, Two Bikes fundraiser, were shared by AETA and were also widely read. We thank all those who helped make the page interesting and informative, especially Glenda Lasslett.

3. **AETA Website**

The website - www.AETA.net.au - is an important element in AETA's communication suite, with an average of 2,000 unique visitors per month (c.f. 2,100 in 2023) and a total of 53,000 visits (c.f. 57,600 in 2023). The website was maintained by Glenda Lasslett, Emanuel Braz, Jules Ober and Roger King.

4. **YouTube**

AETA has a collection of video recordings of its events on YouTube. For access to these videos see: <http://www.youtube.com/@australia-easttimorassocia7121> www.youtube.com/@australia-easttimorassocia7121

5. **LinkedIn**

In 2024 we set up an AETA page on LinkedIn, mainly reposting posts of relevance to Timor-Leste. We are looking at alternatives to Facebook.



APPENDIX 1: AETA TREASURER'S REPORT FOR 2024

Summary

- AETA remains in a financially strong position at the end of the 2024 calendar year.
- AETA achieved a surplus of \$2,598 (c.f. deficit of \$1,115 in 2023)
Net Assets are \$37,607(c.f. \$35,009 in 2023).

Annual Dinner

The annual Independence Day Dinner was fully booked. The significant increase in attendance (124 in 2024 compared with 67 in 2023) is due mainly to many loyal supporters including key organisers being in T-L to observe the presidential election at the time of the 2023 dinner as part of the AVEOM (AETA - Victoria University Election Monitoring Mission) organised by AETA.

Honouring the Struggle presentation by Pat Walsh

This event was well supported. We are grateful to the St Kilda South Port Uniting Church for the free use of the church.

Book Sales

Sales were similar in total to the previous year. The book stock accumulated through AETA's 40 years work as a book shop and distributor has now been virtually eliminated. The focus is now on book launches and AETA plans not to accumulate stock.

Membership

Membership was lower in 2004 (57) than 2003 (82). It was boosted in 2003 by the Timor-Leste presidential election observation team referred to above.

Donations to AETA

Donations to AETA were similar to the previous year.

Donations by AETA

AETA donated \$1,000 to the Helen Hill memorial in Dili.

Thank you Helen Hill

We remain deeply indebted to the late Helen Hill, not only for her leadership and inspiration, but also for housing the AETA office at no charge since early 2016. Helen's house will be sold early in 2025 and this extremely generous housing of the AETA office will come to an end.

Roger King

Treasurer

1st February 2025

APPENDIX 2: FINANCE REPORT 2024

	2024	2023
Income	\$	\$
AVEOM Election Monitoring Fees	0	881
Independence Day Dinner	7,370	3,040
December 5th Presentation by Pat Walsh	1,110	
Book Sales	990	1,077
Poster Sales	0	0
Food and Drinks	0	130
Members' Dues	1,415	2,020
Donations	1,794	1,585
Postage	0	0
Bank Interest	610	0
Total Income	13,289	8,733
Expenses	\$	\$
Events-METAC/ETSA	700	770
Bookshop Purchases	425	260
Food and Drinks	6,254	4,312
Performance Fees	400	180
Poster Frames	0	157
Venue Rent	0	416
Equipment	0	0
Promotion	0	0
Stationery & Photocopying	0	88
Phone	0	0
Australia Post	261	219
Insurance	0	0
Consumer Affairs	48	61
Office Rent, Body Corporate, Water	0	0
Bank, Trybooking, Square fees	299	208
Website	1,305	926
Donations – 2024: Helen Hill Fund (2023: CHART)	1,000	2,250
Total Expenses	10,691	9,847
Operating Result	2,598	-1,115

Balance Sheet	31 Dec 2024	31 Dec 2023
Current Assets	\$	\$
Balance in		
CBA 1002 9407 (Main Ac)	11,776	9,789
CBA 312350195664 (Term Deposit)	25,610	25,000
Total Cash Assets	37,387	34,789
Inventory		
Stock Value of Books and DVDs	220	220
Change in value of Books and DVDs	0	0
Total Inventory	220	220
Total Assets	37,607	35,009
Liabilities		
Reimbursements owed	0	0
TOTAL Liabilities	0	0
Net Assets	37,607	35,009
Net Asset Previous Year	35,009	36,123
Operating Result	2,598	-1,115
Net Assets Current Year	37,606	35,009

AETA Honouring the Struggle event with Pat Walsh
5th December 2024, St Kilda South Port Uniting Church

Income

Full Price	51 @ \$20		\$1,020.00
Low Income/Student	9 @ \$10		\$90.00
Subtotal		60	\$1,110.00
Book sales at event: Pat Walsh	5 @ \$20		\$100.00
Book sales at event: Other	2@10		\$20.00
Donations: Trybooking + Square	190+30		\$220.00
Total Income			\$1,450.00

Expenses

St Kilda South Port Uniting Church			\$0.00
Food and drink costs			\$413.80
Cost of book stock	5*17		\$85.00
Gifts to Presenters			\$80.00
Trybooking Processing Fees			\$32.51
Square Processing Fees for book sales			\$2.85
Total Expenses			\$614.16

Result

\$835.84

AETA Independence Day Dinner
17th May 2024, Angliss Restaurant

Income

Full Price	110 @ \$65		\$7,150
Low Income			
TL Seasonal Worker	2 @ \$40		\$80
TL Student	5 @ \$20		\$100
Child =<12	2 @ \$20		\$40
Comp	5 @ \$0		\$0
Subtotal		124	\$7,370
Book sales at dinner		14	\$200
Donations		17	\$514
Total Income			\$8,084

Expenses

Angliss Restaurant	Dinner @\$48 PP X120		\$5,760
Performer's Allowance			\$400
Trybooking Processing Fees			\$197
Square Processing Fees for book sales			\$2
Total Expenses			\$6,360

Result

\$1,724