

Caritas Australia welcomes delegation from Timor-Leste.

Caritas Australia has welcomed a delegation from Timor-Leste, led by Minister for Foreign Affairs His Excellency Bendito dos Santos Freitas and Ambassador to Australia Inês Maria de Almeida, reaffirming a longstanding partnership grounded in solidarity, local leadership and shared commitment to the most vulnerable.

The visit underscored Caritas Australia's deep roots in Timor-Leste, where for decades it has worked alongside Church, community and government partners to support people through conflict, recovery and ongoing development challenges.

Caritas has operated in Timor-Leste at a diocesan level since 1999 following the independence vote and unified as a national organisation in March 2025. It is now positioned to provide long-term development support as well as emergency response, walking alongside the church.

This enduring presence reflects a commitment on the part of Caritas to human dignity, subsidiarity and solidarity, ensuring communities are supported to lead their own development and respond to times of need with hope.

Hi Excellency Minister Freitas acknowledged the significant role Caritas has played throughout Timor-Leste's history, particularly during periods of crisis.

"Caritas has a better approach to the community, this grassroots connection is very important to bring direct impact," Minister Freitas said.

"During the most difficult times, Caritas was there early, supporting people when assistance was limited. Today, its role remains crucial in serving the poor, the marginalised and those most in need."

Discussions focused on strengthening collaboration in disaster preparedness and emergency response, as communities across Timor-Leste increasingly face climate-related shocks and other crises with limited resources, equipment and training.

Both the Minister and Ambassador expressed strong interest in expanding joint efforts to ensure more coordinated, community-led responses, leveraging Caritas's extensive network of dioceses and local parishes to reach those most at risk.

Caritas Australia's Programs Director, Dan Skehan, said the meeting highlighted shared priorities in building resilience and supporting locally led solutions.

"In times of growing uncertainty, solidarity matters more than ever. Together with our partners in Timor-Leste, we are committed to supporting communities to ensure they have the tools and resources to face future challenges," Dan Skehan said.

"Looking ahead, there is a real opportunity to strengthen disaster preparedness and emergency response by working alongside Caritas Timor-Leste and their diocesan networks. This would see trusted local relationships built on to help remote and vulnerable communities prepare for, respond to and recover from crises, with support from Caritas Australia and the Australian Government through its Australian Humanitarian Partnership in particular."

The visit reaffirmed Caritas Australia's ongoing role as a trusted partner in Timor-Leste and its commitment to deepening collaboration in the years ahead, building resilience, strengthening communities, and ensuring that even in the most difficult times, hope remains.

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