

Bishop Michael Kennedy and Caritas Australia CEO and visit Timor-Leste.

Bishop of Maitland-Newcastle Michael Kennedy, a Caritas Australia Board Director, has this week joined Caritas Australia CEO Kirsten Sayers on a visit to Timor-Leste, meeting with Church, community and national leaders, including Prime Minister Xanana Gusmão and Cardinal Virgílio da Silva, to deepen a longstanding partnership grounded in faith, solidarity and locally led development.

The visit comes as Caritas Timor-Leste enters its second year as the national coordinating body for the Church's humanitarian and development work, strengthening the capacity of local Catholic organisations to respond to poverty, climate change and disaster risk across the country.

Throughout the visit, they have also met with women leaders, farmers, savings groups and community members participating in Caritas-supported climate resilience and development programs, including initiatives addressing water security, sustainable agriculture, disaster preparedness and livelihoods.

Timor-Leste continues to face significant challenges, including poverty, food insecurity, climate change and increasing exposure to floods, droughts and extreme weather. Rural communities are often on the front line of these pressures, requiring locally led solutions that strengthen resilience and create opportunities for future generations.

"The people of Timor-Leste continue to show extraordinary resilience in the face of many challenges," said Kirsten Sayers. "We have been inspired by communities who are adapting to climate change, strengthening livelihoods and creating opportunities for their families despite considerable challenges. Our role is to walk alongside them as partners, listening and supporting locally led solutions."

Bishop Michael Kennedy reflects on the visit as a living example of faith in action, saying "The Church in Timor-Leste is a source of great hope. We have witnessed communities that continue to face hardship with courage, dignity and an unwavering trust in God's presence.

"Encountering families, community leaders and Church leaders has reminded us that true development is not simply about projects or infrastructure. It is about people, relationships and the conviction that every person is created in the image of God and deserves the opportunity to flourish."

Caritas Australia has walked alongside the people and Church of Timor-Leste for decades, supporting communities as they recover from disasters, adapt to climate change and create opportunities for future generations. Today, that partnership includes strengthening the newly established Caritas Timor-Leste network and supporting community-led climate resilience programs across the country.

ENDS

Media contact: Tara Harvey 0484 002 021 tara.harvey@caritas.org.au or caritasmedia@caritas.org.au