



Independence Day

Timor-Leste regained independence in 2002. This followed a referendum in August 1999, and a wave of violence and destruction as the Indonesians withdrew after 24 years of occupation.

Independence Day on 20 May 2025 was celebrated in several Geelong schools.

Iona College embraced the spirit of unity and democracy with a week of meaningful events. Festivities began with a Tasty Treats Drive where students and staff came together to indulge in delicious goodies, all in support of GVFS scholarships program.

Furthering awareness and fundraising efforts, Iona hosted an Election Day BBQ, uniting students, staff and the local community over the classic democracy sausage. Adding to the significance of the occasion the Timor-Leste flag proudly flew over the College throughout the week symbolising the nation's resilience and reinforcing the importance of education and democracy in shaping the future.

Iona College is committed to building meaningful connections with Timor-Leste. In pursuit of this vision, staff member Ella Lane will embark on a reconnaissance trip this June, laying the groundwork for student immersion experiences in the future.

Anna Roberts, teacher
Iona College



On Tuesday 20 May **Christian College Geelong campuses** came alive with colour, culture and community spirit as we celebrated Timor-Leste Independence Day. This annual event provides a meaningful opportunity for our College to honour the deep and ongoing partnership we have shared with the people of Timor-Leste over 20 years.

Students and staff across all campuses participated in a variety of activities that acknowledged the significance of Timor-Leste's journey to independence and the resilience and hope of its people. From flag raising ceremonies and themed assemblies to fundraising initiatives, the day was a joyful expression of friendship and solidarity.

Senior school was also privileged to host an interschool celebration welcoming students and staff from other GVFS including Sacred Heart, Kardinia International College, Christ the King Primary School, St Francis Xavier Primary School and Iona College to join us in marking this special occasion.

The students were able to interact and talk about their shared interest and passion for Timor-Leste, a great opportunity for students to come together and celebrate.

Jane Smith, teacher
Christian College Geelong

Reflections on Independence Day at Christian College

On Tuesday 20 May the school leaders got to attend Christian College Geelong to celebrate East Timor Independence Day. We all arrived wearing a tais from Viqueque. We were lucky enough to join the liturgy that explained Timor-Leste history and how they gained independence. It was very emotional to hear how hard those times were for the Timorese people but also how they pushed through it and gained independence.

After the liturgy we got to talk to different people from other schools like Christian College, Sacred Heart and Kardinia. We spoke about some ideas that could help connect us with the people from Timor-Leste. Although at first it felt different talking to people we didn't know, it ended up being really nice to hear all the different ideas from different people. Most people would say the best thing to do is to make friends.

Then we had a Zoom call with Samuel where he showed us some of the ways they celebrate Independence Day in Timor-Leste. He also showed us some of the kids singing in the Kindergarten. It was very heartwarming to see that although they don't have much they are all still really happy.

Overall we really enjoyed and felt honoured to get to go to celebrate Timor-Leste's Independence Day with so many new people. It was great to be part of such a special day.

Addison Jackson, Chloe Stevenson, Lachlan Montgomery
Students at Christ the King Primary School, Newcomb

May 20 marked Timor-Leste's 23rd year of independence. Kardinia had the privilege of attending an Independence Day celebration, hosted by Christian College, joined by other local schools. The thing that stood out to me was the sense of community we established in just over an hour. Upon introduction, there came a mutual understanding fuelled by collective purpose - Timor. Watching bonds that formed between primary and secondary school students was so inspiring, and it proved to me what good human collaboration can achieve. It was amazing to see how proudly the younger students wore their tais and how passionately the Christian College Prefects spoke about Timor's history. It was most clear when we called Samuel from Timor that the most important part of the partnership was friendship.

Celebrations like these are so important for broadening intercultural mutual appreciation between Geelong and Viqueque.



Sara Kristiansen, student
Kardinia International College

Dinner at the Davidson

Once again GVFS held a very successful dinner at the Davidson Restaurant on Friday 23 May celebrating the 23rd year of Independence for Timor-Leste. The guest speaker was Assoc. Prof Dave Fuller, a paediatrician and Healthcare leader. In June 2024, he had the opportunity to travel to Timor-Leste as the trip doctor for the Christian College Geelong prefect trip to Timor-Leste. There he saw the impact of such trips on the local community as well as on those travelling there. Dave shared some reflections on that trip – its impact on him and others. He also provided a great slide show, and some lively Q and A's followed.



Chris Hansen and Assoc. Prof Dave Fuller

Many groups attended to support the Geelong connection with Timor-Leste and particularly Viqueque. Included were Clonard College, Iona College, Christian College, St Joseph's College, Christ the King, Kardinia College as well as the Soroptomists, the GVFS committee and others with a longstanding connection to, and support of, Timor-Leste.



*Patrice Hall, Chris Hansen
and Aisha Kristiansen*



Feedback

On 23 May, I was fortunate to attend a dinner for Timor-Leste hosted at the Davidson. I felt immense pride seeing the amount of people who came in support of Timor. So many different ages, backgrounds and ethnicities, and yet we were all gathered in the same dining hall to hear Dr Dave speak about his experiences in Viqueque. Without Timor, many of us would never have met! I myself spoke to people I would not have been introduced to if it wasn't for our mutual love of this country. Viqueque truly is a point of connection for our Geelong community, and one that should be preserved at all costs.

Sara Kristiansen, student
Kardinia International College

Clonard students who travelled to Timor-Leste last year gave positive comments about the obvious support there is for Timor in the Geelong community.

School Garden Projects in Viqueque

There are now 5 school garden projects in the Viqueque district under the supervision of Jaime de Jesus and his team of volunteers. The next garden is planned for Cabira Oan school. Jaime has had meetings with the Principal, teachers, parent representatives and volunteers and will also coordinate with the Kardinia school trip in June/July 2025. The Cabira Oan school garden will be a partnership between the two schools.



Cabira Oan school garden committee



The school garden at Loi Huno continues to develop and progress with regular working bees involving the school community.



Happy, engaged students at Mamulac school garden working bee 31 May 2025

Social Justice article for Science Training in Viqueque

One of the long term projects of the Kardinia International College Social Justice Committee over the last 3 years has been to support the development of Science education in a Viqueque senior school – Escola 4 Septiembre, a Year 10-12 senior campus in Viqueque. This particular project was initiated and led by the SJC President Sara Kristiansen and funds were raised to provide a professional training opportunity for science teachers through an organisation SESIM (*Sentro Estudio Siensia no Matematica – The Centre for the Study of Science and Mathematics*).

This division of the TL Ministry of Education provided 2 days of holistic and practical training in core science subjects – Physics (electronics), Chemistry (distillation techniques) and Biology (cell structure and identification).

The training in Viqueque occurred in April and overall 13 teachers and 12 volunteer senior students from 5 local schools attended the 2 days. The training provided an opportunity for teachers to connect across different schools in the Viqueque district and to build confidence and connections with a professional body like SESIM.

Jonathan Chapman, teacher
Kardinia International College



Beobe Community and Training Centre

The Beobe Community and Training Centre continues to develop with 60 young students enrolled so far in English and Art classes. Music and computer classes are also planned. The Centre welcomes school groups and others from Geelong to visit the Centre which has the support of the Ministry of Education. Regular meetings are held with the Sub District Administrator of Viqueque.



Beobe Community
and Training Centre

Enrolling in Music
and English at Beobe



Meet the 'Viqueque librarians'

the third of a series of interviews on the ground

During 2024 the connection between partner schools was strengthened with teachers Jonathan Chapman and Carmel Brown interviewing the librarians, meeting with the principals and conducting a review of how the libraries are being used by their community, with librarians greatly valued by the school principals.

There are very few school libraries in Timor-Leste so these schools have the opportunity to build a great resource for their community. The increased focus on 'Literacy' by the Department of Education should flow onto an increase of support for these roles. We look forward to seeing this over the coming years.

Cabira Oan

Partner School: *Kardinia International College*

Librarian: *Deoniza Filipa Soares*

What I do in the library on a 'normal' day

Cleaning library

Borrowing books to students and also organising class sets of books for teachers.

Organising study and reading in the library



My biggest success

That students and teachers are able to come into the library, into a clean and open space to study in the library.

Teaching students in the library.

My biggest challenge

Not having a printer to print labels for books & the only printer for staff is in staff room.

Damage to books and needing to repair and cover books.

How the library is helping students?

Students may borrow books to take home.

Providing a quiet and clean space for the students and teachers to work.



What might help me in the future to make the library an even better space?

Nothing mentioned but encouraged Deonizia to consider this question for next year's review.

Having the materials and ability to repair books

DP Suggested more hours for librarian

A printer in the library.

School Trips Planned for 2025

Several Geelong schools are travelling to Timor Leste in June/July 2025, helping to add more energy to our programs and further cementing our friendship with the students and their families in Viqueque. They include Clonard College, Kardinia International College and Christian College Prefect trip.

In addition, St Ignatius College will be visiting Dili while Sacred Heart and Geelong Grammar are exploring options for staff visits. A GVFS School Team has been meeting regularly and its members are planning a staff trip.

It is wonderful to see this extensive re-engagement and such a positive attitude displayed by the Geelong school community.

GVFS AGM 13 August

The GVFS AGM will be held at 5.00pm Wednesday 13 August at Iona College, 242 Horseshoe Bend Road, Charlemont. Please come along – all welcome!

This will be an opportunity to hear from students and others who have visited Viqueque to talk about their experience.

Australia-East Timor Friendship Network Conference

The conference will be held in Dili on 10 and 11 July with the theme ***Building Stronger Friendships***. We are delighted that students from Kardinia International College will be making a presentation at the conference and are confident that they will acquit themselves well. Others from Geelong will also be attending and we look forward to hearing from them on their return. In addition Jaime de Jesus, organiser of the School Garden Projects in Viqueque, has been invited to be a speaker.

The Australia Timor-Leste Friendship Network (**AusTimorFN**), established in 2009, brings together Australia Timor-Leste Friendship groups that have operated across Australia and in Timor-Leste for 25 years. The relationship between Geelong and Viqueque began in 2002 with the formation of the Geelong-East Timor Friendship Committee (later Friends of Viqueque), resulting in the formation of the Geelong-Viqueque Friendship Schools in 2006 to support education in Viqueque and develop long term friendships between Geelong and Viqueque schools.

These organisations have had a lasting and meaningful impact in both Geelong and Viqueque due to the passion and hard work of many.

Cash for Cans

Cash for Cans has recycled 11,964 containers raising \$1,196.40 for the GVFS scholarship program. This is an amazing effort by many.

Please continue to contribute to this project, a sustainable way to raise funds for young people's education.

Any can, bottle or tetrapak that has the 10c logo on it can be redeemed, but wine and spirits are not included. The process is simple:

1. Download the CDS-Vic West App from the App Store on your phone. Ensure you download the West App. **DO NOT** download the East or North version of the App



2. Register to obtain your personal identifying barcode
3. In the App select Charities and search for 'Cans For Scholarships'
4. Select 'Cans For Scholarships' as your nominated charity
5. When depositing cans or bottles at the drop-off stations scan your barcode in the AP on your phone. Your name will come up with the nominated charity on the screen. Then start depositing your cans and bottles.

