



2019 Railaco 'Immersion'

Malcolm France

Presentation to St Canice's

It had never occurred to me that after PNG, East Timor is Australia's closest neighbour. Far closer than other neighbours we may be more familiar with such as New Zealand or perhaps Fiji. Australians can travel to the capital Dili on a comfortable modern jet from Darwin in less time than it takes to fly from Sydney to Melbourne.

Our neighbours in East Timor of course live in a very different neighbourhood. But the smiles and the welcomes are as warm as any we could hope for from our neighbours back home.

And the value of whatever gestures we can offer either spiritually or materially is stretched as far as possible. There is absolutely no wastage in overheads. In just 15 years, for example, the school supported by the St Canice parish has grown from a tin shed with about a dozen

students, to a high school of several buildings serving nearly 400 students with all of last year's final year cohort successfully completing the National Exam.

I would like to thank everyone at St Canice who has helped the Railaco program in any way at all. The results are clearly remarkable.

And finally, my wife, Barbara, and I would like to thank Michael Musgrave whose commitment to Railaco over so many years led to this immersion visit that opened our eyes and introduced us to our neighbours in East Timor.

Malcolm France

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