



# Friends of Suai

Annual Report 2023/24





## City of Port Phillip

99a Carlisle Street  
St Kilda VIC 3182

Phone: **ASSIST** 03 9209 6777

Email: [portphillip.vic.gov.au/contact-us](mailto:portphillip.vic.gov.au/contact-us)

Website: [portphillip.vic.gov.au](http://portphillip.vic.gov.au)

### Diversity

Receive the latest news from your City and Council [portphillip.vic.gov.au/divercity](http://portphillip.vic.gov.au/divercity)



### National Relay Service

If you are deaf or have a hearing or speech impairment, you can phone us through the National Relay Service (NRS):

TTY users, dial 133677, ask for 03 9209 6777

Voice Relay users, phone 1300 555 727,

then ask for 03 9209 6777.

[relayservice.gov.au](http://relayservice.gov.au)



Please consider  
the environment  
before printing.

## Table of Contents

Message from the Chair .....	4
Friends of Suai/Covalima Strategic Plan 2020-25 (Revised 2022) .....	6
Outcome 1 The Covalima Community Centre and its programs are strengthened towards sustainability .....	7
The Covalima Community Centre (CCC).....	7
Scholarship program .....	11
IT Social Enterprise .....	14
Community training at the CCC .....	15
With One Seed reforestation .....	16
Women’s empowerment.....	18
Advocacy and research .....	20
Suai Senior Secondary School support .....	21
Outcome 2 City of Port Phillip and Covalima municipality and their communities are actively engaged in cultural exchange, mutual learning and development activities.....	23
Study tour.....	23
Wesley College presentation by Julian Hill .....	24
Fundraising events .....	24
In-kind support from Council.....	25
Annual meeting .....	26
Outcome 3 Friends of Suai/Covalima is accountable, effective and efficient .....	27
Community donations and fundraising.....	27
Transition update.....	28
Financial report .....	29

*Cover photo: The staff at the Covalima Community Centre in Suai, May 2024. .*



## Message from the Chair

It is a great pleasure once again to present the Annual Report of Friends of Suai, Covalima (FoSC). The report outlines the successes and achievements this year, and how we have responded to the challenges we have faced with a reducing budget.

In Suai, our partner the Covalima Community Centre (CCC) continues to play a vital role as a community development centre. It manages a range of programs for the community throughout the District and continues to provide opportunities for people to develop their capacities and achieve their potential. The important Scholarship Program and IT Social Enterprise are managed by the CCC and supported by Friends of Suai. Both continue to play a central role in the CCC activities and underpin their high profile and strong reputation in Covalima.

In June we conducted a Study Tour of Timor Leste, to enhance understanding and awareness of the country and its challenges. Ten participants travelled with the two committee members who hosted the group, using the services of a local tour operator.

In Dili we met with a range of organisations to hear about current issues, including the proposed oil and gas developments. We were hosted by the Australian Ambassador to Timor Leste HE Caitlyn Wilson at the Australian Residence for drinks and a discussion about the work of Friends of Suai - a most enjoyable occasion.

The group visited a range of organisations and places of interest in Dili before travelling to Suai. There the CCC Director and staff provided a briefing on their activities and projects being managed in Covalima, and small groups visited the Suai Senior Secondary School, the Safe House for victims of domestic violence, and a women's weaving group in Suai Loro, amongst others. We travelled to the subdistrict of Tilomar to learn about the With One Seed program and to visit a farmer who is benefiting from this innovative project, having established and maintained a tree plantation.

Bad weather curtailed our plans to visit Balibo but overall the Study Tour was well received and participants felt they had learned more about the work of the CCC and the current context in Timor

Leste. Tour participants each made a donation towards scholarships and the tour raised over \$10,000 for the work of Friends of Suai.

Here in Port Phillip another successful Trivia Night was held in April attended by over 100 people, and with support from local traders and residents who donated items for auction, we raised over \$11,000.



*Photo: Megs Alston (centre) with study tour participants and the Principal of Suai Secondary School (right).*

The challenges ahead include how we can support the CCC to continue its good work, as the reduced grant from the City of Port Phillip which covers their running costs will completely finish in the next financial year. In addition, the Coordinator's role will be phased out making it much more difficult to provide mentoring support and advice for the CCC. We are grappling with these challenges and are currently exploring alternative ways of providing support. We will also amend our Strategic Plan accordingly, to take account of reduced capacity.

Thank you to our generous donors and volunteers who enable the Friendship to flourish and I sincerely thank our Coordinator Carlene Harlock once again for her outstanding work, both here and with the CCC. Finally, thanks also to the Council of the City of Port Phillip for the support it provides.

### **Megs Alston**

Chair, Friends of Suai /Covalima Community Reference Committee



*Graduates from the Friends of Suai scholarship program came to Suai to meet with the study tour participants in June.*

# Friends of Suai/Covalima Strategic Plan 2020-25 (Revised 2022)

## **Outcome 1 The Covalima Community Centre and its programs are strengthened towards sustainability**

### **Strategies**

1. Support CCC priority programs in education, public health, climate adaptation, livelihoods, social enterprise and advocacy.
2. Assist and provide mentoring support for CCC capacity strengthening priorities in areas of human resources, management and governance.
3. Actively work to assist the CCC to gain funding, support and resources in light of the reduced CoPP annual grant.

## **Outcome 2 City of Port Phillip (CoPP) and Covalima municipality and their communities are actively engaged in cultural exchange, mutual learning and development activities**

### **Strategies**

1. Increase engagement with CoPP schools and youth.
2. Increase engagement with community organisations, businesses and CoPP residents with the support of Councillors.
3. Friends of Suai/Covalima hold community events and cultural exchanges (in person or virtual) to celebrate the friendship with the Covalima municipality.
4. Encourage reciprocal learning between the local government of CoPP and Covalima municipality.

## **Outcome 3 Friends of Suai/Covalima is accountable, effective and efficient**

### **Strategies**

1. Enhance communications with CoPP Council, staff, residents and key stakeholders
2. Develop new donors and fundraising initiatives.
3. Increase and diversify membership of the Community Reference Committee and its working groups.
4. Implement the Community Reference Committee Terms of Reference.
5. Monitor Strategic Plan and annual budget.

## Outcome 1 The Covalima Community Centre and its programs are strengthened towards sustainability

The Friendship between the Port Phillip and Covalima communities has been formally recognised through three consecutive ten-year Friendship Agreements, initially signed in 2000. This was reaffirmed in September 2020 through a third ten-year Friendship Agreement until 2030. The agreement commits to building productive and sustainable relationships with people in the town of Suai and throughout the district of Covalima in Timor-Leste.

The Friends of Suai Community Reference Committee is comprised of community members with an interest and commitment to support development in Timor-Leste. The purpose of the Reference Committee is to deliver on Council's commitment to the friendship with Covalima district. Many community members in Port Phillip are also involved in the friendship and participate in events and fundraising activities.

Friends of Suai work in partnership with the Covalima Community Centre in Suai to meet the aims and objectives of the Friendship Agreement and to ensure the friendship pursues best practice in international development. The CCC has benefited greatly from the friendship and has a high capacity for development.

### The Covalima Community Centre (CCC)

The 20+ staff at the Covalima Community Centre (CCC) implement a range of community development programs and initiatives that have a huge impact on improving the lives, wellbeing and opportunities for people throughout this very poor district of Timor-Leste. Their work is guided by their vision to 'build a community in which everyone has the opportunity to develop their capacities so that they can contribute to the social and economic development of the Municipality of Covalima, Timor-Leste'.

The CCC is a registered NGO and training organisation and has partnerships with local and international NGOs to implement a range of programs. The CCC manages initiatives funded through community donations and fundraising by Friends of Suai, and also has internal income-generating activities including community training programs and hiring of facilities.



*Members of the CCC Commission and staff after a quarterly meeting.*



The City of Port Phillip funding for the Friends of Suai (FoSC) program has been the main contributor to the core running costs of the CCC, including key staff salaries, administration and operational costs. Since 2021, this funding has incrementally decreased and will cease in 2024/25. FoSC are working to raise additional funds and assist the CCC to find alternative income sources to cover the shortfall.

The CCC is a highly professional, inclusive community hub which facilitates training and programs which benefit people throughout the district of Covalima. Covalima district is comprised of seven sub-districts and the population of over 80,000 people live in 30 villages throughout the district.

This report includes an overview of all CCC activities to demonstrate the breadth of programs at the CCC and acknowledges all partners funding programs. Much of this information is reported to Friends of Suai through weekly online meetings between the CCC Director and Friends of Suai Coordinator (employed by City of Port Phillip). Friends of Suai would also like to thank the CCC staff and partners for contributing information and photographs for this report.



## Governance and management

The CCC is governed by a Commission of nine volunteer community leaders (three women and six men). The Commission operates under a constitution and meets quarterly to oversee operations and provide information and advice. The President of the CCC Commission is Sgt Amelia de Jesus Amaral. Amelia is head of the Vulnerable Persons Unit in Suai and is a strong advocate for gender equality. The CCC Commission and Director provide leadership in community development activities throughout Covalima district.



The CCC is managed by the Director, Alberto de Jesus Barros, with assistance from the Vice-Director and Finance Manager. There are more than 20 staff at the CCC, with programs led by Coordinators. The staff regularly collaborate and share information, especially in relation to proposal writing, policy implementation and professional development. This has been integral to the success of the CCC.

The Friends of Suai Coordinator has regular communication with the Director and Program Coordinators to provide assistance, mentoring support and to share updates on programs.

*Photos: (above) Sgt Amelia de Jesus Amaral, CCC Commission President; (left) CCC Director Alberto de Jesus Barros welcoming the FoSC study tour group in June 2024.*



## Strategic plan

The CCC 2020-25 Strategic Plan outlines six key focus areas: Contribute to the empowerment of women in Covalima; Advocacy and influence; Organisational empowerment; Improve agriculture and environment practices in Covalima; Provide training and educational opportunities in Covalima, with a focus on young women and men; and to Promote the health of the community in Covalima. The CCC aligns its reporting of activities to its Strategic Plan. A review is planned for next financial year.

## Financial management

The CCC Finance team has clear and transparent systems and policies for record keeping and monitoring program income and expenditure. Each year the CCC is audited externally by CC Business Solutions in Dili. The annual audit is funded by CCC partners, including the City of Port Phillip. The 2022/23 audit took place in August 2023. The CCC received a clean audit report and all recommendations have been implemented.

The CCC Director and Friends of Suai Coordinator regularly discuss and review budgets and reports for FoSC funded programs. The CCC fulfilled the requirements of the City of Port Phillip funding agreement for core funding for the Centre and provided six-monthly acquittals and reports on all activities and programs.



*CCC Finance Manager Antoineta Moniz (left) training a new staff member to prepare a budget proposal.*

## Policies

The CCC team regularly participate in due diligence processes and partnership capacity assessments. The CCC has now developed and reviewed more than 20 organisational policies including finance and administration, employment and child protection. This year the Friends of Suai Coordinator has supported the CCC to develop an inclusion policy and an anti-corruption and money laundering policy.

## CCC capacity building

Organisational strengthening is a key focus area in both the Friends of Suai and the CCC Strategic Plans and is also a priority for other CCC partners. Program partners provide many development training opportunities as they recognise that training strengthens the CCC capacity and sustainability.

CCC Commission members and staff have participated in a range of training and capacity building activities this year and there has been a strong focus on child protection, advocacy and research.

Some examples of training in 2023/24 include:

- Child protection refresher training
- Advocacy
- Succession planning
- Social inclusion, diversity and human rights
- Gender Action Learning
- Conducting research and collection of data
- Agroforestry

Additionally, the CCC Director has facilitated workshops and discussions on topics including good governance, prioritising, stakeholder analysis and implementation of policies.

The Friends of Suai Coordinator has supported the CCC Director to develop new policies and write grant proposals. Friends of Suai Committee members have also provided training and mentoring to staff on topics including reporting, staff management and succession planning.



Photo: CCC staff members participating in child protection refresher training.

## Scholarship program

Since 2012, FoSC has funded 178 scholarships to students from Covalima district. The objective of the scholarship program is to help students from low-income families to gain the education they need to secure employment, thereby improving their quality of life and that of their families. The benefits also extend beyond the individual scholarship recipients. Graduates are also contributing to their communities by sharing their skills and knowledge to provide vital services including education and health care.

Scholarships are funded through FoSC fundraising activities and community donations. The Education Program Coordinator at the CCC organises the registration and enrolment process and provides pastoral care. Key to the program's success is the thorough selection and interview process and involvement of families to ensure open communication and their understanding of the commitment involved. This has resulted in a high number of students completing their studies and graduating.

Students have been awarded scholarships to continue their education at senior secondary schools, vocational training colleges and universities in Timor-Leste, with courses ranging from nine months to four years in duration. All tertiary and vocational courses provide students with extensive practical placements which allow them to utilise their skills in a workplace environment. This is a great way to prepare them for future employment.

### New scholarships in 2023 and 2024

Nine new scholarships were awarded in 2023. Areas of study were Primary school teaching at Baucau Teachers College (one student), Hospitality at the Canossian Vocational Training Centre in Suai (four students), Motorbike mechanic training at CNFP Senai Becora in Dili (two students) and Automotive studies (two commenced but one withdrew).



In 2024, there were four new scholarships granted. Areas of study were Primary school teaching at Baucau Teachers College (one student), General Construction at Don Bosco Training Centre in Dili (one student) and Motorbike mechanic training at CNFP Senai Becora in Dili (two commenced but one withdrew).

*Photo: Scholarship recipient Deolindo has been studying General Construction at Don Bosco Training Centre in Dili and is specialising in electricity.*



### Baucau Teachers College (ICFP Baucau)

As of 30 June 2024, there are five scholarship recipients at Baucau Teachers College. Most students undertake their practical placements at schools in Covalima and choose to complete the fourth year of study to attain the Licentiate (Bachelor of Education). Students at the College graduate with the skills, confidence and motivation to teach and there are now great employment opportunities for graduates.



*Scholarship recipient Emanuel teaching a class during his final practical placement.*

### Post-graduate students at National University in Dili

Friends of Suai continues to support students at the National University in Dili to complete their post-graduate studies. Three Community Development students are underway and making progress with their post-grad studies. It is a long process, but they are motivated and doing well.



*Four students graduated from Canossian Vocational Training Centre in Suai after completing a Certificate 2 in Hospitality.*

## Graduations

Graduation ceremonies are a great way to formally recognise the achievement of students and celebrate the completion of an educational experience. The students are proud of their accomplishments, and many share photos of their graduation ceremonies.

Eight students graduated this year, completing post-grad midwifery (one student): hospitality (four students), motorbike mechanic training (two students) and one automotive student.

Additionally, two students successfully completed three years of study at Baucau Teachers College and their graduation ceremony was held in March. One of the graduates was awarded a Certificate of Academic Distinction for achieving the highest academic results in three years of study. Friends of Suai continues to support them to complete their fourth-year post-grad research and placement to gain their Bachelor of Education.



Photos: (Top right) Odélia graduated from UNTL in November and is now employed by NGO Frontline; (Bottom left) Two students completed three years at Baucau Teachers College; (Bottom right) Revalino graduating at Don Bosco Training Centre after completing automotive studies



## Employment outcomes

Scholarship graduates are encouraged to report to the CCC when they gain employment. This year the following information was provided on employment outcomes:

- One graduate who completed the motorbike mechanic training course at SENAI Becora training centre, started his own informal business repairing motorbikes in his home sub-district. He was then offered employment at the motorbike workshop in Suai where he completed his work placement during his course.
- Two of the qualified midwives now have paid employment as nurses and are working at health posts in their home sub-district of Zumalai in Covalima district. Another is now employed by an NGO called Frontline, to provide maternal and child health services in Dili and Bobonaro district.
- Two of the four students who completed the hospitality course in 2023 are now employed locally in Suai.

### Jobs for teachers

As part of the Timor-Leste National Government teacher career regime, many qualified teachers are now being appointed as permanent teachers at public schools throughout the country. To date, three scholarship recipients who completed their qualifications at Baucau Teachers College have been formally appointed as teachers. More opportunities will arise for teacher graduates later this year.



*Qualified midwife Elsa working at the Fatuleto health post, Zumalai sub-district, Covalima.*

## IT Social Enterprise

The IT Social Enterprise (ITSE) at the Covalima Community Centre provides essential access to computers and training, helping community members gain skills for employment, education and better access to information. As a branch of InfoTimor, the ITSE focuses on capacity building through technology to drive social change. The team refurbishes computers, offers free domain software, and delivers community training programs. Income is generated from training and selling donated equipment, sustained by regular donations from the City of Port Phillip. This initiative supports employment and contributes to the core running costs of the CCC.

There is great demand for affordable computer equipment and training in Covalima district, and the CCC is the only local provider.





*Fifteen women completed computer literacy training at the CCC in July, using computers donated from Council.*

## Community training at the CCC

Many young people in Covalima enrol in English and computer training courses at the CCC. Students report that the training allows them to improve their school grades (at primary and secondary school level), increase their chances to access further study opportunities and gain skills for employment. This year there were 120 registrations for English language training and 53 registrations for computer training.

The CCC also facilitated a community training program for 15 women to learn basic computer skills. This initiative was funded by Friends of Suai in response to a request from women involved in leadership training at the CCC, who wanted to develop their digital literacy skills.

The two-week program was delivered in late June with all women completing, and enjoying, the training. Participants learnt basic skills to use Word, Excel and access information on the internet. Many of these women aspire to financially support their families and become leaders in their

communities. As well as gaining practical skills, they are building relationships and developing their confidence. There is great demand from more women also wanting to participate.



*Photo: Many young people complete English language training at the CCC.*

## With One Seed reforestation

With One Seed (WoS) is a certified carbon forestry program in Timor-Leste, working with subsistence farming communities. It involves planting trees on deforested land, local ownership, environmental education and building local economies. Farmers receive a small annual income for planting and maintaining trees on their land.

WoS was established in Tilomar sub-district in 2019, with staff employed at the CCC to manage the initiative. More than 100,000 trees have now been grown and distributed to small landholders. With support from Xpand Foundation, With One Seed Bagueia and Rai Matak (Green Land) EU funding, this successful initiative is now expanding into other areas of Timor-Leste. WoS in Tilomar is now one of five locations in four districts of Timor-Leste and there has been a lot of collaboration. The WoS team participate in monthly carbon farming meetings with other locations to share knowledge, experience and information. There are also many training opportunities for CCC staff and the tree growing communities.

There are plans to establish a national Rai Matak Foundation later in 2024, which has the principle aim to continue to work with local communities throughout Timor-Leste to carry out carbon farming using the successful WoS model.



*Thousands of trees have been grown in the nursery in Lalawa since 2019.*

## Tree distribution and technology

In May, approximately 28,000 trees were distributed to farmers, bringing the total number of trees planted since 2019 to more than 104,000. To date more than 248 small landholders have received trees, with many more hoping to be involved in the coming years.

Data on tree location and ownership is captured using TreeO2 technology. This digital community forestry management platform is specifically designed to manage smallholder tree and carbon farming data. The total number of surviving trees is counted each year to calculate the annual payments to farmers.



## Gold Standard certification

The WoS project in Tilomar is well underway with the process to gain accreditation for Gold Standard certification, with auditors visiting in July to verify the trees and meet with the community. Accreditation is a rigorous process with many requirements, which so far have been met. Once accredited, the carbon stored in the trees can be sold on the international carbon market. The income this will generate will ensure the sustainability of the project into the future. The social, economic and environmental impacts of this initiative have been lifechanging for the communities involved and the CCC team is proud to be involved.



*Auditors visited in July 2023 as part of the accreditation process for Gold Standard certification.*

## Annual farmer payments

Farmers receive an annual payment of USD 50 cents for each tree that is planted and maintained. Until 2023, FoSC fully funded the annual farmer tree payments. This year, Xpand Foundation also provided funds for the farmer payments as the numbers have grown quickly. 130 families have received payments totalling more than USD18,000 for 37,843 trees planted in 2020, 2021 and 2022 bringing much needed income into remote villages in Tilomar sub-district.



*Photos: (above) Approx. 28,000 trees were distributed and planted in May; (Right) Annual payments to farmers bring much needed income into rural communities in Tilomar sub-district.*



## Women's empowerment

The International Women's Development Agency (IWDA) has worked in partnership with the CCC since 2009 to implement the Rural Women's Development Program (RWDP). IWDA is an important partner of the CCC and regularly contributes to operational costs of the CCC and provides professional development opportunities for staff.

Initially the RWDP program focused on establishing and supporting women to develop livelihood groups with income generating activities including horticulture, food production and handicrafts. Staff worked with the groups to link them with key stakeholders and access markets. Women are also involved in capacity development activities, community events and networks. These are great forums for civic education covering topics including disability inclusion, discrimination, child protection and harassment.

Women from all 30 villages in Covalima district have participated in leadership and advocacy training and report that they have developed confidence in public speaking and to advocate for local women. Strong leaders have emerged through the program. The RWDP team has built broad networks and now has the skills to also deliver many training programs to women and men in communities throughout the district.

The CCC is now nationally renowned for their work to support women's leadership, gender equality and raise awareness about gender-based violence. Their work is having a profound impact on the everyday lives of women and children, including people with disabilities, as they build the confidence and capacity to advocate for their rights.



*Communities throughout Covalima participate in gender equality and inclusion training programs.*

### Village election candidate support

The RWDP leadership and advocacy training in August 2023 focussed on ‘potential women’ to prepare them to run as candidates in village elections in October. Sixteen women were candidates for the position of village chief and 46 women ran for the position of sub-village chief. The outcome was one woman was elected village chief, 11 women were elected as sub-village chiefs and one was also elected as a cultural leader. This outcome was a huge success for the women and for the CCC. Many women are now inspired to run in the next election and become leaders in the community.

*Photo: CCC Commission member Santina de Jesus was a candidate in the village elections in October 2023.*



### International days of commemoration

A forum was held at the CCC in December to commemorate 16 Days of Activism against Gender-based Violence, with over 200 people attending. The theme was the prevention of family violence and the role of women in society. Speakers acknowledged the role of women in the struggle for independence and encouraged them to share their stories. Women who were successful in the village elections also encouraged more women to be future leaders and to participate in politics.

The International Women’s Day event in March was held in the remote sub-district of Fatululic, so that the CCC could expand their outreach. It was a very successful event, with 196 very enthusiastic and engaged attendees. Sgt Amelia de Jesus Amaral spoke about gender equality, gender-based and family violence, and reporting mechanisms. A man from Suai also spoke about discrimination, human rights and his lived experience of being part of the LGBTIQ+ community.



*International Women’s Day celebrations in Covalima, organised by the CCC.*

## Advocacy and research

### Networks

The CCC is an active and well-respected member of FONGTIL, the national network of non-government organisations in Timor-Leste. FONGTIL has sought assistance from the CCC with advocacy work in Covalima district and actively supports them with organisational strengthening opportunities. Working collaboratively strengthens the CCC capacity to advocate for community needs and to enhance their reputation.

The CCC also participate in quarterly civil society organisation partnership meetings hosted by local government. This is a great opportunity to share experiences and knowledge. They also work with local law enforcement to assist with supporting victims of violence.

### Social audit - School 'snack' program

The CCC successfully applied for funds from the Office of the Prime Minister Civil Society Fund to conduct a social audit of the government funded school feeding program in five schools in Covalima. They received funds to implement this as a pilot program early in 2022 and were invited to apply again this year.

Students should receive a snack (lunch) through a government funded program. There has been widespread concern about the misuse of funds and quality of food in this program. Five schools in remote locations in Covalima were audited. Activities focussed on identifying issues and building the capacity of the school communities, including the Parents' Association, to work together to advocate and make improvements. The issues and outcomes were reported locally and at a national meeting, and the findings are likely to have a much wider impact beyond the five schools audited. The social audit has allowed the CCC staff to demonstrate their capacity to advocate for communities and shows the important role of civil society organisations in supporting government and community.

### Women Survivors of Violence project

A consortium comprising local NGO ACBIT (Asosiasaun Chega Ba Ita), Asia Justice & Rights and Global Survivors Fund funded the CCC to implement the first phase of a project titled 'Searching for Women Survivors of Violence'. A CCC staff member was trained to identify and connect with survivors of sexual violence during the 1975-1999 conflict. The objective was to identify their needs, advocate to provide reparations and give women the opportunity to support each other in the spirit of solidarity.

More than 60 women in Covalima were identified and invited to participate in the program. The CCC has now reported on their findings and has applied to continue the next phase of their project to improve the lives of the women survivors and their children. This will involve advocating for access to health, education and housing.



## The Asia Foundation

The Asia Foundation (TAF) organises national research projects in Timor-Leste and regularly engages the services of CCC staff to conduct interviews and collect data in communities in Covalima district. In recent years, many CCC staff have participated in this research and have developed their skills in conducting interviews, community engagement, planning and reporting. The CCC has been commended by TAF for their efficiency in organising their work and for their excellent reporting. This year the CCC staff were contracted to work alongside health professionals to collect data on the health of pregnant women and infants. They identified that 40% of the women and infants were suffering from malnutrition.

In a separate project, the CCC team worked with the national health network in Timor-Leste to conduct interviews on services provided at five health clinics in Covalima. The findings showed a lack of staffing, insufficient medicines and facilities at the clinics. The data collected from the research contributes to a national advocacy campaign to improve health facilities and outcomes for people in rural communities.



*CCC recognition from The Asia Foundation for their collaboration on a national research project.*

## Suai Senior Secondary School support

Friends of Suai and the CCC has had a long history of supporting the Suai Secondary School in Suai, which is the only public senior secondary school in Suai and has more than 2,000 students.

The water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) project was a major undertaking by FoSC and the CCC in recent year and has provided running water and toilets for the large school community. Having these facilities has improved student attendance and outcomes. The facilities are well maintained and the consistent water supply has meant that gardens have been planted around the school grounds.

## Library

Friends of Suai has provided funds, resources and skilled volunteers to establish and maintain a library at the school. This includes funding the salaries of two librarians who interact with students and manage the library collection which includes more than 4,200 fiction, non-fiction and reference books in four languages. The librarians report that students enjoy using the library space and teachers regularly borrow the science equipment, also donated by Friends of Suai, for class activities.



*Photos: (Left) Many senior secondary students enjoy reading books and studying in the Suai Secondary school library.*

*(Below): The first inter-school basketball tournament was held at Suai Secondary School this year.*

## Basketball court

The reconstruction of the basketball court in 2019 was funded through donations to FoSC, including contributions from Albert Park College and the Port Phillip Basketball Association. Two interschool basketball tournaments were held at the school this year, including a competition held to celebrate Timor-Leste Independence Restoration Day on 20 May. This was a great success and there are plans to make this an annual event.



## Outcome 2 City of Port Phillip and Covalima municipality and their communities are actively engaged in cultural exchange, mutual learning and development activities

### Study tour

Friends of Suai organised a 7-day study tour in June. The tour was hosted by two Friends of Suai Committee members and operated by Timor Indigenous Tours. For some of the ten participants, it was their first time visiting Timor-Leste, and for others it was a chance to return, learn more about the friendship or reconnect with friends.

The itinerary featured meetings in Dili with the Minister for Education and Australian Ambassador Caitlin Wilson, as well as specialists and political leaders. During their three-day visit to Suai, the group was hosted by the CCC, and visited educational and community projects, including a visit to the Suai Secondary School and a rural women development groups facilitated through the CCC.

The tour was an opportunity for participants to learn more about current issues such as education, health and infrastructure challenges and the role of oil and gas in development. The tour fee included a contribution to the Friends of Suai scholarship program and participants were able to meet with some of the graduates during the tour.

Learnings and comments from the study tour group included the valuable information gained at meetings and briefings in Dili and the clear contrast in development and infrastructure between Dili and the districts. Group members who were returning to Suai after visiting previously, reflected on the growth and development of the CCC and the lasting impact of friendship-based community building.



Photos: (Left) Study tour participants met with the Minister of Education, Dulce Soares; (Right) Tour organiser Ann Wigglesworth with tour operator Jonias Exposto, from Timor Indigenous Tours.



## Wesley College presentation by Julian Hill

On 22 May, Julian Hill MP delivered a lunch time presentation at Wesley College, with more than 80 students and staff attending. Julian is the former Mayor of Port Phillip who signed the first friendship agreement with Xanana Gusmao in 2000. He shared the story of the beginning of Friends of Suai, the importance of giving back to the community and international relations.

The objective was to generate interest in learning more about Timor-Leste and Friends of Suai, and to encourage student-led initiatives through the International Baccalaureate 'Community Action Service' projects.



*Megs Alston, Chair of Friends of Suai with Julian Hill MP at a Friends of Suai presentation at Wesley College.*

## Fundraising events

### Annual trivia night

The trivia night is the largest annual fundraising event for FoSC and receives great support from the Port Phillip community. More than 100 residents and friends attended the event at the Middle Park Bowls Club on 18 April. Local traders and residents generously donated over \$4,300 worth of goods and services for the silent auction and raffle that took place during the evening.

Deputy Mayor Cr Louise Crawford served as the MC for the evening and did a fantastic job. With 11 tables competing, it was a full house and lots of fun. Thanks to the generosity of participants the trivia night successfully raised \$11,544.



*More than 100 people attended the annual trivia night at Middle Park Bowls Club.*

Staff at the CCC showed their appreciation by sharing photos of the team holding signs to thank the Port Phillip community for supporting this fundraising event. These photos were displayed at the event and were greatly appreciated by attendees.



Photos: (Left) The annual trivia night includes a silent auction with many donated goods and services; (Right) Staff at the CCC with a message to share at the annual trivia night.

## Film nights

Friends of Suai held two film fundraisers at the Classic Cinema in Elsternwick this year. Both documentary films, 'Rachel's Farm' and 'Climate Changers' had strong themes linked to addressing climate change. There were 70 tickets sold, raising \$937 for the With One Seed carbon forestry project in Tilomar sub-district.

## In-kind support from Council

### Computer equipment shipped to Suai

The City of Port Phillip provides in-kind support for the friendship by donating computers that would otherwise be disposed of when upgrading equipment. The equipment is shipped to the IT Social Enterprise at the CCC in Suai where it is used to deliver community training programs or sold to the community at affordable rates.



Staff at the CCC opening boxes of computer equipment donated from City of Port Phillip.



## City of Port Phillip staff volunteering

In October, nine Council staff volunteered their time to pack computer equipment to be shipped to the CCC. This involved great collaboration from staff across Council departments and there was a lot of enthusiasm to support this activity.

Council staff were also offered the opportunity to support the friendship by assisting at the annual trivia night in April. Two staff volunteered their time and did a fantastic job to help the event run smoothly and ensure people enjoyed the evening.



*Council staff from across the organisation donated their time to pack computer equipment to ship to the CCC.*

## Annual meeting

The FoSC annual community meeting was held on 21 November. Guest speaker Grant Wyeth, Editor at the Asia-Pacific Development, Diplomacy and Defence Dialogue (AP4D), presented key insights from a recent AP4D paper titled "What does it look like for Australia to shape a shared future with Timor-Leste." His discussion emphasised the importance of fostering friendship-based relationships and the role of all levels of government. Highlights from the FoSC 2022/23 Annual Report were also shared at the meeting, along with updates on CCC programs that are supported by Friends of Suai fundraising and in-kind support.



*Photo: Annual meeting guest speaker Grant Wyeth (left), met with CCC Director Alberto de Jesus Barros at a meeting in Dili this year.*



## Outcome 3 Friends of Suai/Covalima is accountable, effective and efficient

### Community donations and fundraising

Friends of Suai is a registered fundraiser with Consumer Affairs Victoria and provides annual reports on fundraising activities.

Activities this year included the annual trivia night and two film nights. These events and the outcomes are detailed earlier in this report. Funds were also raised through a silent auction of an Easter weekend getaway at a holiday home in Moggs Creek.

In addition, Friends of Suai received \$21,831 in direct donations from individuals and church groups in Port Phillip and the wider community.

Friends of Suai is grateful for all donations and would like to acknowledge donors who make regular contributions and those who have requested donations to FoSC programs and the CCC in lieu of birthday and Christmas gifts.

In-kind donations from the community included items from local businesses and individuals for the annual trivia night. Friends of Suai also received the following donated items which have been shipped to the CCC in Suai:

- Basketball equipment from the Port Phillip Basketball Association, including basketballs, trophies, pumps, rings and bags
- Resources for the Suai Secondary School library
- 75 chairs for the CCC training room
- N95 masks and hospital gowns for health clinics in Covalima
- Walking sticks and wheelchairs from Rotary Donations in Kind

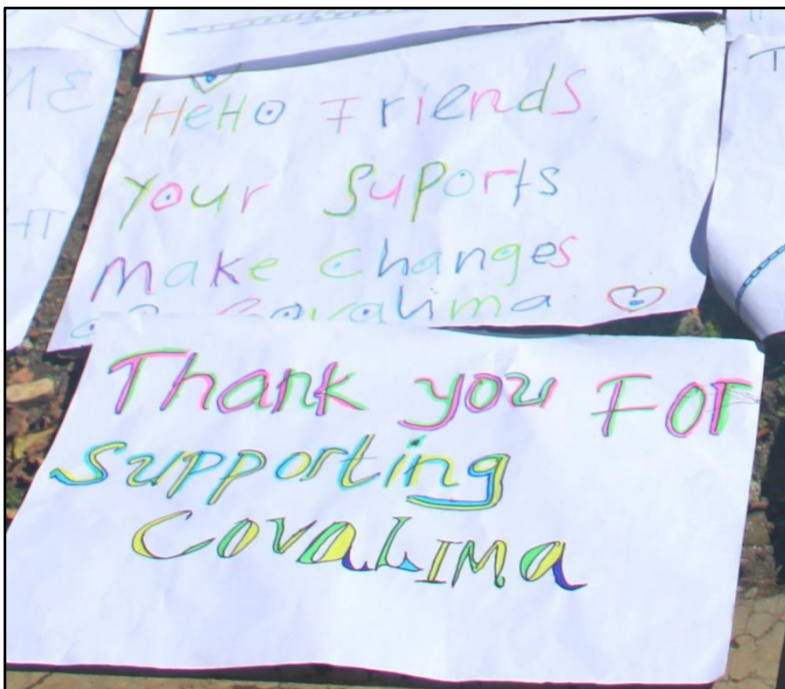


*A donation of 75 chairs will improve the meeting room facilities at the CCC. Rooms are hired to government and community organisations, generating income for the CCC.*

## Transition update

In December 2021 Council endorsed a transition plan to cease funding for the Friends of Suai program over a five-year period. Direct funding to the Covalima Community Centre in Suai has decreased by 25% each year, with no further funding allocated after 30 June 2025. Staff support for the program will also reduce substantially next financial year.

The withdrawal of financial support will significantly impact the capacity of the Friends of Suai to deliver on the 2020-25 Strategic Plan. An annual review report will be prepared in the coming months and may result in a reduction in the type and number of activities FoSC is able to support.



*Messages of thanks from the staff at the CCC.*

# Financial report

## Friends of Suai/Covalima Income and Expenditure - 1 July 2023 to 30 June 2024

<b>INCOME</b>		
City of Port Phillip funds	29,891	*
<b>Friends of Suai donations and fundraising</b>		
Individual donations and grants	21,831	
Trivia night fundraiser	11,544	
Film night fundraisers	1,825	
Study tour	10,829	
Bank interest	1,729	
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>\$ 77,649</b>	

<b>EXPENDITURE</b>		
<b>City of Port Phillip funds:</b>		
CCC core grant (CoPP funding agreement)	15,017	*
CCC project support	10,108	*
Shipment of computer equipment	3,290	*
Meetings and events	688	*
Material costs	469	*
Administration	319	*
<b>Friends of Suai donations and fundraising</b>		
Scholarships	23,978	
CCC core funding (FoSC contribution)	16,538	
Teacher / library project	5,631	
<i>With One Seed</i> reforestation	1,980	
Fundraising costs	563	
<b>Total Expenditure</b>	<b>\$ 78,581</b>	

\* City of Port Phillip funds

## Friends of Suai/Covalima Donations account - 1 July 2023 to 30 June 2024

<b>Opening balance 1/7/2023</b>	<b>\$ 32,623</b>
Plus income	84,249
Less expenditure	85,180
<b>Closing balance 30/6/2024</b>	<b>\$ 31,692</b>



