

Tuesday, 9 September 2008

HELPING OUR NEAREST NEIGHBOUR

The Attorney-General Michael Atkinson has welcomed East Timor's Justice Minister to South Australia to learn about the State's court and prison systems.

Her Excellency Dra. Lucia Lobato is in South Australia for two days accompanied by a delegation including the directors of the fledgling nation's three prisons.

"I invited Her Excellency to visit earlier this year, offering her and the East Timorese Government the chance to observe world's best practice in correctional centres, prisoner management and innovation in the courts," Mr Atkinson said.

"Australian State government's have ample expertise and experience to offer East Timor as it works to establish itself as the world's newest democracy," Mr Atkinson said.

Yesterday Her Excellency and the East Timorese delegation visited Mobilong Prison and the Edwardstown Community Correctional Centre.

Today the group will speak with Port Adelaide Magistrates about the Nunga Court, learn about drug-detection dogs and visit Yatala Labour Prison, the Adelaide Pre-release Centre and the Adelaide Women's Prison.

"The South Australian Government is more than willing to extend the hand of friendship to East Timor. We can learn from each other to create better ways of delivering justice," Mr Atkinson said.

This is Her Excellency's first visit to Australia and she says Australia will be an important partner as her country develops its justice system.

"I want to see first hand the best jail security and prisoner management and be able to consider what we can achieve in East Timor," she said

"I want to build a strong relationship with South Australia. In future I think there could be valuable training opportunities that could benefit our two countries," Minister Lobato said.

"I am also very interested in the Australian approach to indigenous justice. In future, I hope to return and look into this further," she said.

"We do not have the budget to afford everything we'd like but if we leave South Australia with a few more ideas about how to develop our justice system this will be a great benefit for East Timor."

Her Excellency Dra. Lucia Lobato was a founding member of East Timor's Social Democrat Party and was active in helping to achieve independence for the country, which was declared in May 2002.