

NEWS RELEASE



October 2, 2006

ENGINEERS LET THE SUN SHINE IN – IN EAST TIMOR

Two local engineers, Natalie Toose, 30, and her partner Nigel Baker, 31, from Albert Park head off to East Timor tomorrow for two weeks to install solar equipment in Suai and Same.

Ms Toose and Mr Baker are members of the Alternative Technology Association (ATA), a not-for-profit organisation which is sending an international team of eleven to work on 18 different projects across four districts in East Timor – Suai, Same, Alieu and Oecussi. They are also members of Friends of Suai, the local Port Phillip organisation which has pledged to help reconstruct Suai, a small coastal town on the West Timor border almost completely destroyed in 1999.

Both feel strongly about the future of East Timor.

“Nigel and I have done quite a bit of traveling, though not to East Timor, and we’ve been looking for opportunities to put our engineering skills to good use. It’s hard to think of a better place to do so,” Natalie Toose said.

“East Timor has got plenty of sunshine but not a cheap and reliable electricity supply. Most power is generated from diesel and, with the price of oil likely to skyrocket even further, diesel is not a realistic option in the long run – and that’s not even taking account of the environmental problems that flow from using fossil fuels. These panels will let the sun shine in.”

The couple is paying its own way to East Timor where they’ll be installing solar panels on the Suai community centre, youth centre and community radio station and a health clinic in the mountains nearby which has no power at all. The Friends of Suai have donated \$25,000 towards the cost of these panels. Ms Toose and Mr Baker are also installing solar panels in a town called Same.

ATA was established in 1980 and started work in E Timor in 2004. Some of the equipment to be installed was donated through industry while other equipment has been purchased at cost price.

While Ms Toose and Mr Baker are in Suai, they will hold workshops in Suai to give trainees some theory and hands-on experience in installing and maintaining the solar equipment

“Training up local people to put in and maintain the solar panels is one of the most important things we’ll be doing,” says Ms Toose.

“In the long run, much of East Timor’s power supply could come from the sun as it does on Pacific Island countries like Vanuatu”

It has been a huge logistical effort to get the solar panels and then ship them to East Timor.

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