

Bega Valley film screening: 'This is the only boundary Australia hasn't resolved yet'



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DRAWING LINES: An image from the documentary film Time to Draw the Line. Picture: Youtube

A film detailing Timor-Leste's long-running maritime boundary dispute with Australia is being brought to the Bega Valley.

The Amanda King and Fabio Cavadini directed film Time to Draw the Line will be projected onto the Picture Show Man Cinema screen in Merimbula on March 27.

The screening is just one of three in NSW, and is part of a fundraising campaign by Bega Valley Advocates of Timor-Leste for education, women's programs, infrastructure, cultural activities, scholarships and teacher training in the nation of over a million people.

Earlier this year Timor-Leste dropped its spying case against Australia in the international court, raising hopes of an end to what has been described as a bitter stand-off over \$40 billion in oil and gas fields.

“For years now East Timor has been simply asking for a fair and just settlement on permanent boundaries between our two countries but, despite international support and court rulings, this is yet to be achieved,” Bega Valley Advocates of Timor Leste member Leona Cairns said.

“The many and devious twists and turns of this continuing saga make fascinating and disturbing viewing.”

The organisation’s vice president David Gallan has just returned from a trip to the nation, and was impressed by the film at its premiere screening in Canberra.

“This is the only boundary Australia hasn’t resolved yet,” he said.

“So the difficult thing here is twice Australia has undertaken negotiations, with the first poorly timed because it was before independence, and when it was revisited was during the recent spying saga.”

Councillor Jo Dodds is excited the film will be showing in the Bega Valley, just one of seven venues it will visit across Australia.

“It recognises the long history the Bega valley has with Timor-Leste,” she said.

“I think it’s awesome a little rural town like us has made an effort to connect with a country right on our doorstep, yet so far away.

“It’s nice to show Bega punches above its weight when it comes to Knowing and caring, and it’s important to realise it’s a two way process because we learn from them.

“It’s not just about charity, but intercultural communication,” Cr Dodds said.



Timor-Leste Sisters Delfina and Filomena are welcomed by Bega Valley Advocates for Timor Leste members John Coman, Jo Chapman, Leona Cairns, Margaret Broadbent, Marie Oakley, Matthew Heffernan, David Gallan, Robert Grasby and Jan Midena.

The organisation will also be holding a picnic on Sunday, March 19 from 12pm by the Bega River with Timor-Leste ambassador to Australia Abel Guterres likely to be in attendance.

At the organisation's first meeting for the year, two Carmelite Sisters from Timor-Leste, Delfina and Filomena, were welcomed to the Bega Valley.

"The sisters are visiting us for three months as part of the Friendship Agreement exchange program, which exists between the Bega Valley Shire and the district of Barique - Natarbora," Ms Cairns said.

Last year this exchange program saw the first visit to the region by a student from Natarbora.

"It was very successful, and Brian Klau has now returned to Timor to continue his studies and use the experience gained here," Ms Cairns said.

"It is hoped we will have alternate visits in the future."