

Chris White on accepting Solidarity Award at the 2018 APHEDA AGM

At the University of Adelaide I graduated in Law, Politics and History during the 1968 revolutionary era. I protested against the Vietnam War and US imperialism and supported many liberation struggles.

I first worked for the AWU SA Branch in 1974. Then the Miscellaneous Workers Union SA branch (now United Voice) in 1975. In 1985 I was elected Assistant Secretary of the United Trades and Labour Council of South Australia and then as Secretary until 2002 and on the ACTU Executive. Later in Canberra, I worked for ASMOF ACT and NTEU ACT.

In 1985, Tas Bull from the Seaman's Union, asked if I could assist setting up APHEDA in Adelaide. He explained that what was planned: to support Palestinian work – health projects, enduring skill development and capacity building for reconstruction. APHEDA's Middle East projects are still exemplary, despite Israeli genocidal policies continuing.

At the United Trades and Labor Council (UTLC) of South Australia we encouraged union support and financing of APHEDA. We improved our APHEDA work by delegating initiatives to the unions. At that time, a young unionist asked me whether she and her group could organise APHEDA functions. Yes, thank you. She said she hoped to one-day work for APHEDA. Keep going and you may, I say. Deb Nicholls has now worked in Vietnam. I mention this to encourage others to be active. SA APHEDA holds Terri Daktyl memorial dinners to raise funds and establish the Vietnam project and the Timor Leste Working Women's Centre and domestic workers programme. Adelaide activists share this solidarity award.

I remember the challenges assisting APHEDA's anti-apartheid solidarity in 1988 when Adelaide OHS trainer Mick Gallant was sent to Zimbabwe to deliver OHS seminars for the South African unions. Later, union training in South Africa is appreciated by the South African workers, who were suffering high accident rates and health problems. As an OHS activist, I particularly followed APHEDA OHS programmes on workplace hazards, and the development of training programmes for the OHS trainers.

I assisted the ANC representatives in Australia, Oliver Tambo and the Eddie Funde SA tour that was a great success.

As well, I ensured our UTLC Peace and International Committee gave solidarity to the APHEDA projects in Palestine, Vietnam, Cambodia, Cuba, the Philippines, Thai-Burma, Arche Indonesia and Timor Leste.

Philip Hazleton in Vietnam introduced me to his OHS and HIV work and the programme workers. I both represented asbestos pipe and sheet workers in Adelaide and for over 40 years campaigned against asbestos. Philip introduced me to Vietnam's OHS authority to discuss asbestos.

Please support the Stop Asbestos Use in South East Asia campaign and the union struggle internationally for global justice against asbestos use.

We moved to Canberra in 2005 and I joined the APHEDA committee with Jane Timbrell and others. I listened to APHEDA supporter Labor Minister Bob McMullan. Labor Governments, Bob Hawke, Gareth Evans and others were in alliance with APHEDA projects. In 2018, I enjoyed the Quiz Night on Alex White's Unions ACT table.

In 2011, we moved to Darwin. I commit to reviving APHEDA NT. One function needs to go well as ACTU's Ged Kearney agrees to attend. I put up my own money for the Tuesday Railway Club food and music evening. On the preceding Monday I asked how many bookings had been received; only two. I better ring Ged and cancel. No, it will be OK, the Territorians laugh. It was.

As an Adelaide East Timor solidarity activist from the 1970's, Timor Leste is my favorite APHEDA programme. APHEDA supported Australian union protests, bans and strikes against Indonesia whose TNI militia inflicted horrific violence after the massive YES vote for Independence.

I have good memories of the [2011 APHEDA Timor Leste Study tour](#) with Elisabeth de Araujo and others – I talk with Zito da Costa, General Secretary of the KSTL (like ACTU) and Almerio Vila-Nova and attended his [2012 Sindikatu Jeral Trabalhadores Timor Leste General Workers Union 2nd Congress](#).

In 2013, Ged Kearney approved me as an ACTU speaker at the [2013 KSTL Konfederasaun Sindikatu Timor-Leste AGM](#) The international solidarity guests are good.

I wrote up the 'strike stories' from Zito and Almerio. One strike story is [here](#). Peter Jennings APHEDA: "Timor Leste has the right to strike and in their Constitution. Our Fair Work Australia does not."

APHEDA organised international solidarity with [Timor Leste strikes](#)...

Peter Jennings visited me in Darwin and we discussed Timor Leste union development problems: “like pushing molasses up a hill”. I delivered a paper on strikes at the University of Timor Leste.

I met [Zito in Darwin and Almerio at the ACTU Congress](#) and at the NT United Voice AGM.

I tried to write up APHEDA stories from activists building the Timor Leste unions but did not get very far. Peter Jennings related some history. Australian union activists included those from Darwin like Didge McDonald ‘the father of TL unions’; Alison Tate, Cathy Bloch, Jim Mellor, Peter Murphy, John Cummins and CFMEU, Thomas Mayor MUA NT and many union volunteers. I talked with the Timor Leste unionists about their successes – the Waterfront and Maritime organisers, the Construction union, with Rob Durbridge and the Teachers’ union and at the Fretilin Congress. I talked to APHEDA Dili about the Timor Leste Working Women’s Centre and rights for domestic workers. I was a Solidarity observer for the Timor Leste Presidential and Parliamentary Elections.

Xanana Gusmao, former Prime Minister and President of Timor Leste said:

“I commend the Australian union movement and its humanitarian aid agency Union Aid Abroad APHEDA for your solidarity and support to our independence struggle and your on-going commitment to supporting us in developing health, education, reconstruction and human rights programs.”

In 2014 we moved to Melbourne. ‘Retired’, I say yes at a meeting to revive Melbourne’s APHEDA. My first disaster is only a few come to the fundraiser film ‘Balibo’. Unions asked me to their meetings to hand out information. I did not have the contacts to organise a big APHEDA dinner. We did the APHEDA Benefit for Gaza at Bella Union VTHC.

I remember Luke Hilakari held a VTHC youth unionists function and encouraged them to join APHEDA, at the door. To my surprise, most are not members. Many do not like my “you are not getting out until you sign up.” Then those who do sign hand me back the form. No I say, you

contact APHEDA. There is much work to build membership to 20,000 by 2025.

Please promote APHEDA's history to young unionists. See my [review](#) I say to Matt Kunkel VTHC, 'Sydney has to fund a Melbourne organiser' and now Samantha Bond does this well.

Thank you Kate Lee and Angelo Gavrielatos. Solidarity with APHEDA's liberation and livelihood struggles.