

# Timor-Leste graduates first locally licensed Steel Camel operators

*Ten F FDTL members complete specialist training, earn seven credentials each and begin operating two Australian Defence Force M730 Steel Camels.*

SYDNEY, NSW, AUSTRALIA, September 14, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Ten F-FDTL members graduate from specialist training as two Australian Defence Force M730 Steel Camels are officially handed over to Timor-Leste

Timor-Leste has reached an important milestone in building its sovereign workforce and infrastructure capability, with ten members of the Forças de Defesa de Timor-Leste (F FDTL) graduating from the M730 Steel Camel Capability Development Programme.



Tammy Kassiou, Australian Timorese business leader, founder and managing director of the Philotimo Group and Chair of the GEM Foundation.

The graduation follows an intensive month long training program delivered in Tetum and English, culminating in the official handover of two M730 Steel Camel machines from the Australian Defence Force to the F FDTL.

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This is what genuine sovereign capability looks like: building the skills, qualifications and licences Timor-Leste needs to operate and sustain its own capabilities.”

*Tammy Kassiou*

Timor-Leste now has a locally trained and licensed group of operators equipped with internationally aligned competencies to safely operate the specialist machinery.

The program has been developed around sustainability and self reliance, enabling the equipment to be operated, maintained and supported within Timor-Leste rather than creating ongoing dependence on overseas specialists.

Australian Timorese business leader and workforce development advocate Tammy Kassiou said the graduation represented what genuine capability development should achieve.

"This is an incredibly important moment because we are not simply bringing machinery into Timor-Leste, we are building the human capability required to operate it safely and sustainably," Kassiou said.

"Equipment alone does not build a nation. Skilled people do.

"Ten F FDTL members now have skills, qualifications and licences that will help Timor-Leste develop and maintain its own capability, with that knowledge remaining within the country and its people.

"That is what genuine sovereign capability looks like."

From machinery handover to national capability

The graduation ceremony marked the completion of the M730 Steel Camel Capability Development Programme and the beginning of an important new operational capability for the F FDTL.

The ceremony commenced with prayers and a formal blessing of the machinery, followed by the national anthems of the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste and Australia.

Representatives of the Defence Cooperation Programme and Australian Embassy joined senior Timor-Leste representatives to recognise the achievement.

Concluding remarks were delivered by Chefe do Estado Maior General das F FDTL, Tenente General Domingos Raúl, Falur Rate Laek, together with a representative from the Ministry of Public Works acting on behalf of H.E. Prime Minister Kay Rala Xanana Gusmão.

Kassiou said the program demonstrated how international partnerships can create lasting capability when equipment is accompanied by quality training.

"Handing over a machine is one thing, but ensuring Timorese people have the skills and qualifications to operate and sustain that capability is much more powerful," Kassiou said.

"The objective must always be to build capability within Timor-Leste rather than dependency outside it."

Ten graduates gain internationally aligned qualifications

The ten F FDTL members completed theoretical and practical training at the OHS facility at the B.J. Habibie site, with practical assessments undertaken at Metinaro Military Base.

Each graduate achieved three Statements of Attainment aligned with the Australian Qualifications Framework:

- RIIHAN309F, Conduct Telescopic Materials Handler Operations
- RIIHAN301E, Operate an Elevated Work Platform
- RIIWHS204E, Work Safely at Heights

Graduates also achieved four Timor-Leste national licences covering work health and safety induction, telehandler operation, elevated work platforms and working at heights.

Following the handover, graduates demonstrated their skills through a live Steel Camel Machine Capability Demonstration, operating the machinery within a safety framework developed in accordance with Decree Law No. 19/2025.

A new standard for Timor-Leste's workforce

Kassiou, founder and managing director of the [Philotimo Group](#) and Chair of the GEM Foundation, has spent years strengthening employment, education, vocational training and workforce development opportunities in Timor-Leste.

She is also behind Licensing TL, which is supporting the introduction of [training, certification and licensing](#) systems for construction, civil works and other high risk industries.

Kassiou said the F FDTL graduation demonstrated why qualifications and licensing must sit at the centre of Timor-Leste's next phase of development.

"This is what we want to see replicated across Timor-Leste, with people trained, assessed and licensed properly before they undertake high risk work," Kassiou said.

"Whether someone is operating equipment for defence, construction, infrastructure, mining or logistics, safety and competency cannot be optional.

"As investment in infrastructure and industry grows, our investment in people must grow with it."

Building capability that stays in Timor-Leste

A key feature of the program is that the M730 was selected with long term local sustainability in mind, allowing the machinery to be operated, maintained and repaired locally without continuous access to overseas specialists or sophisticated diagnostic infrastructure.

Combined with trained and licensed local operators, the machines can become sustainable national assets rather than simply imported equipment.

"Every time we train another person, we strengthen Timor-Leste, because every licence represents another worker who understands how to undertake their role safely and every qualification builds confidence, employability and productivity," Kassiou said.

"Today we are celebrating ten highly capable F FDTL graduates, but tomorrow we want to see hundreds and ultimately thousands of Timorese people gaining recognised skills and licences across the industries building this country's future.

"This is how we create lasting change, one skilled person at a time."

### Skills as the foundation of nation building

Kassiou believes developing a highly skilled domestic workforce will be critical to ensuring the benefits of Timor-Leste's growth remain within the country.

"A nation's greatest resource is its people, and if we give Timorese people world class training, recognised qualifications, strong safety standards and opportunities to use those skills, we create capability that cannot be taken away," Kassiou said.

"The graduates should be enormously proud because they haven't simply learned how to operate machinery, they are helping demonstrate what the future of Timor-Leste's skilled workforce can look like."

### About Licensing TL

Licensing TL is Timor-Leste's trusted partner for building a skilled, safe and job ready workforce. Working with government and industry, Licensing TL supports training, certification and licensing frameworks across construction, mining, logistics, oil and gas and other high risk sectors.

The organisation delivers international standard training, recruitment and consultancy services supported by qualified local and international trainers and government aligned competency systems.

<https://licensingtls.com/>

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