

Forum hears about Witness K case

A PACKED audience in Wentworth Falls was given an insight into the "Witness K" case last Wednesday, June 9.

Sister Susan Connelly delivered a talk about the Bernard Collaery, Witness K case at the forum.

Mr Collaery, a lawyer and former ACT attorney-general, is awaiting trial after pleading not guilty to five charges alleging he breached national security laws and conspired with former spy Witness K to do so. He is accused of sharing protected information about an operation in which Australian spies bugged a government building in East Timor during negotiations over oil and gas reserves.

Organised by the Blue Mountains East Timor Sisters, Dr Susan was invited to speak about her understanding of the case and the threats she sees to democratic processes in Australia.

The case is being undertaken now in a closed court, an unprecedented decision taken by the Attor-



Domingas Gama, Sister Susan Connelly and Eva Gama at the Light on Democracy Forum.

ney General.

The forum was called "Light Up Democracy". Sister Susan outlined the history of the negotiations about oil revenue that have preoccupied Australia-East Timor relations for a large part of the time since the referendum held in 1999.

Sister Susan said: "The referendum resulted in East Timor becoming independent from Indonesia. Prior negotiations about oil revenue struck between Indonesia and Australia needed to be reviewed. East Timor was then one of the poorest nations in the world. Life has improved over the last 20

years though now with 90 per cent of the population subsistence farmers and little local industry and resources, the country is still extremely vulnerable to poverty".

Sister Susan, now in her mid-70s, was recently been awarded a PhD on the subject of Timor-Leste.

The Blue Mountains East Timor Sisters are a group of women who have been raising funds to support women and children in Timor-Leste over the last 17 years. Now the group includes two young Timorese women living locally and studying degrees at Western Sydney University - Eva and Domingas Gama.