

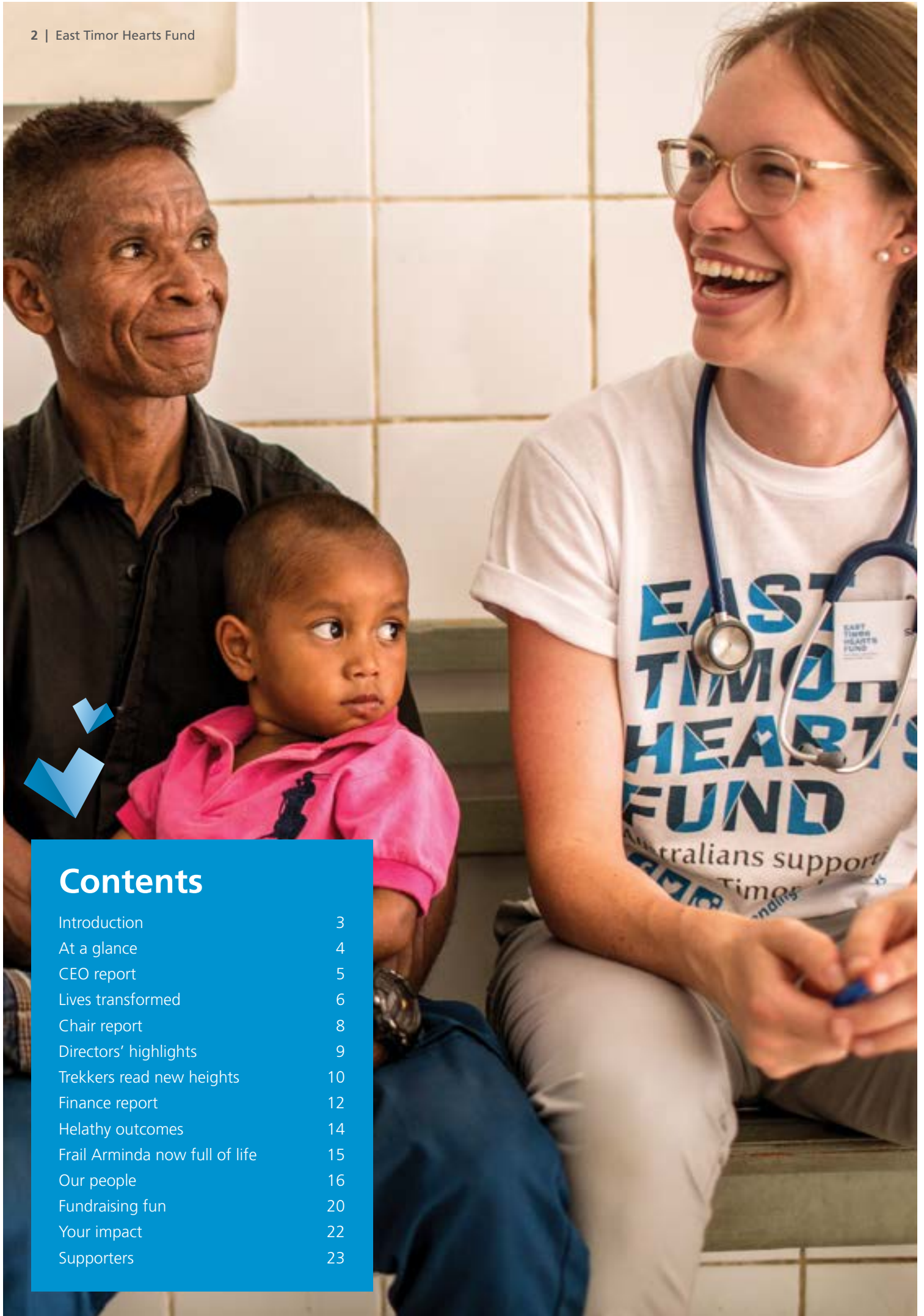
Lives Transformed

2017 Annual Report

**EAST
TIMOR
HEARTS
FUND**

Australians supporting a
healthy Timor-Leste





Contents

| | |
|--------------------------------|----|
| Introduction | 3 |
| At a glance | 4 |
| CEO report | 5 |
| Lives transformed | 6 |
| Chair report | 8 |
| Directors' highlights | 9 |
| Trekkers read new heights | 10 |
| Finance report | 12 |
| Healthy outcomes | 14 |
| Frail Arminda now full of life | 15 |
| Our people | 16 |
| Fundraising fun | 20 |
| Your impact | 22 |
| Supporters | 23 |

We're doing even more – together

Why do we sometimes need to push ourselves beyond our known limits?

Our inaugural Trans-Timor Trek, featured on pages 10–11 exemplifies this urge to tackle tough challenges. Perhaps it's because we don't know what we can achieve until we try.

At East Timor Hearts Fund this year, we've also been pushing ourselves to achieve more, with your enthusiastic support.

We treated another eight heart patients from Timor-Leste, repairing the potentially fatal impacts of rheumatic heart disease and other cardiac conditions. On pages 6–7, these patients share their heartfelt thanks with our medicos and you our supporters for making that possible.

We screened 424 more patients for cardiac disease in Timor-Leste, an increase of almost 40 per cent on 2016. We achieved more in rheumatic heart disease prevention by expanding our penicillin program. We also offered more training for health and medical professionals in Timor-Leste, strengthening local capacity.

And we did more fundraising, including Operation GoodHearts, which raised \$10,000 within five days and then a further \$4000, thanks to your overwhelming generosity. These funds will support our first paediatric surgical mission to Timor-Leste in 2018. By the time this report is published, the successful mission will have been conducted.

The Operation GoodHearts appeal added to the total fundraised of \$234,000 this past year, much of it through fun events like Run Melbourne (details on pages 20–21) that got us moving. But no monetary figures could measure the true value of your in-kind support – a huge thank you to our many skilled volunteers, medical and corporate partners and loyal sponsors, including our new friends at Northern Oil & Gas Australia, major partners in our Operation GoodHearts mission.

This year we were also fortunate to be joined by the experienced international development professional Stuart Thomson, who comes with a wealth of experience via major NGOs Oxfam and World Vision. You can learn more about Stuart in his profile on page 16.

These achievements remind us of how far we've come in just seven intense years. In 2010, Ingrid Svendsen resolved to help cardiologist Dr Noel Bayley after he was overwhelmed by donations to support his voluntary efforts for heart patients from Timor-Leste. With early support from Warrnambool health administrator Glynn Palmer, they established what became East Timor Hearts Fund, with Dr Bayley as its honorary medical adviser and Ingrid its inaugural chair. The fund's strong network of supporters now includes leading hospitals and medical volunteers in Melbourne, Sydney, and Geelong and Warrnambool in regional Victoria.

We continue to be guided by:

- **Our vision** – better health and healthcare services for East Timorese with heart disease
- **Our purpose** – best practice heart care for young East Timorese
- **Our values** – respect, compassion, integrity, optimism, collaboration
- **Our strategic direction** – to provide more in-country services and improve cardiac care in Timor-Leste.

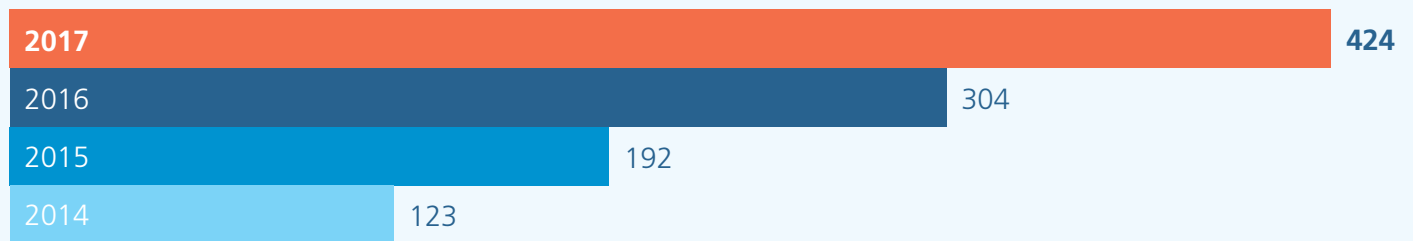
We hope you enjoy this report and find it as informative as our 2016 publication – which won Bronze at the Australasian Reporting Awards. (For this accolade we thank our talented designers Struck & Spink, the wonderful writing and editing team at Fullpoint Media and our brilliant team of photographers, who are listed on the back page of this report, for their voluntary services. We believe that we may be the only organisation to have produced an award-winning report entirely with volunteer and pro-bono labour.)

Thank you again for your loyal and generous support – we look forward to working with you to mend more broken hearts in 2018.

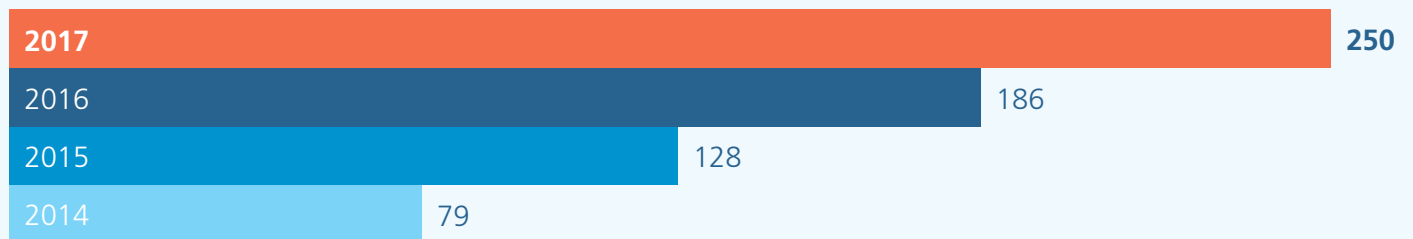
For more information about how to volunteer or donate, please visit easttimorheartsfund.org.au

At a glance

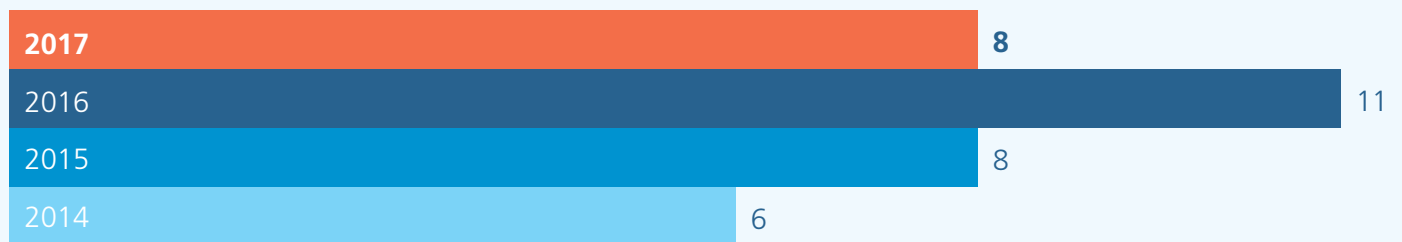
Patients screened



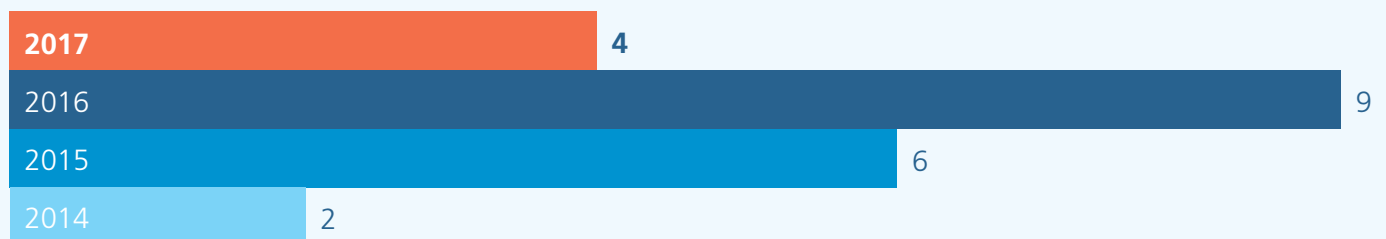
Women and girls screened



Surgery in Australia – all patients



Surgery in Australia – women and girls



CEO report

Scaling peaks and aiming higher



My first year as CEO of East Timor Hearts Fund has confirmed for me how highly ambitious this organisation is – our team scales new peaks and keeps aiming even higher. This ethos is evident throughout our annual report, highlighting our achievements during 2017. And we have set bigger challenges for the year ahead in tackling rheumatic heart disease and strengthening the health system in Timor-Leste.

Our life-saving efforts continue: in 2017 we operated successfully on eight patients in Australia and screened 424 patients in Timor-Leste, a 40 per cent increase on the previous year. This was made possible by your generous donations totalling more than \$234,000 and invaluable in-kind support from our many skilled volunteers, medical and corporate partners and loyal sponsors.

In 2017 we worked to maintain our life-saving work through surgery and, at the same time, build prevention and community-awareness raising work in Timor-Leste. We also invested in systems and structures to continue the professionalisation of the organisation. We brought on a highly skilled part time operations manager to support our life-saving work in Timor-Leste and in Australia. While general giving from our generous supporters increased during 2017, the upfront investment to support the delivery of the ambitious 2017–2020 Strategic Plan meant that overall the organisation made a financial loss for the year of \$159,765. This investment will be realised in future gains for the organisation, both in terms of lives saved and transformed, and also in the number of supporters around this great cause. More information about our financial results is on pages 12–13.

Seeing our supporters rally to help us raise \$10,000 in just five days to help fund Operation GoodHearts, our first cardiac surgical mission to Timor-Leste, was a huge morale boost in 2017. The mission, scheduled for 2018, will see Australian heart specialists work alongside Timorese medical professionals to operate on at least 10 children in five days. Our new sponsor, Australian resources company Northern Oil & Gas Australia, is generously supporting the mission.

This year we were proud to welcome Western Bulldogs footballer Lin Jong, the first and only Timorese-Australian AFL player, as our new ambassador. Lin is boosting community awareness of our work, and lifting the spirits of our young patients.

Another endorsement we are proud to announce is the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission (ACNC) Charity Tick. The tick tells donors that we are registered by the ACNC, and that our accounts and other information is publicly available via the online Charity Register. A visit to the ACNC's Charity Register confirms that East Timor Hearts Fund's work is meeting a need no other organisation is addressing. It is the only organisation solely focused on improving heart health in Timor-Leste, a country with some of the world's highest rates of rheumatic heart disease.

Beyond our regulatory and financial requirements what truly lies at the heart of our mission is our volunteers and pro-bono partners. Not only does this offer great value for money for our supporters, it brings with it a positive culture. It is a culture deeply embedded in our own sense of what it is to be Australian. It starts with doing something for our fellow human being and not expecting anything in return. The skilled volunteers and pro bono partners who work tirelessly for our cause are the true heartbeat of our organisation. Such a culture makes me extremely proud.

We are looking forward to 2018's big challenge of bringing cardiac surgery to Timor-Leste through Operation GoodHearts, forming new agreements with the Ministry of Health in Timor-Leste and expanding our work on rheumatic heart disease.

We know that none of these considerable achievements would be possible without your support. I hope that you know how grateful we are to have it.

Together we can mend broken hearts.

Stuart Thomson
Chief Executive Officer



Lives transformed – our 2017 patients

New hearts, new lives, thanks to your support

Rosalina

“It’s great to feel healthy. I can see my baby girl grow up and be there for her.”

Rosalina, 22, had mitral stenosis, a narrowing of the heart valve caused by rheumatic fever she contracted as a child. Rosalina was too weak to play with her baby, Alisia, and unable to study and work. After a high-tech, mitral balloon procedure at Eastern Heart Clinic in Sydney in early May, Rosalina made a speedy recovery and was soon home with her family.

Rosalina was hugely grateful to cardiologists Dr Simon Eggleton, Professor Roger Allan, Eastern Heart Clinic and Prince of Wales Private Hospital, and health support worker and interpreter Simoa Tilman who accompanied her to Australia.



Dina

“Thank you, from my heart.”

Young mum Dina’s heart condition made her life difficult, sapping the energy she needed to care for her family and enjoy life. Dina underwent a mitral balloon procedure by volunteer cardiologist Dr Simon Eggleton at Eastern Heart Clinic in November. When she returned home with her husband, Joao, Dina was looking forward to simple things like cooking meals for her family, doing housework and taking her children to school.

To all the donors who made her treatment possible, Dina said: *“Thank you very much for everything done to save my life.”*



Jose

“There is always hope.”

Jose, 17, made such excellent recovery from a mitral valve replacement in December that he was home in time for Christmas. Jose’s mother, Fabiola, came with him from Timor-Leste and was hugely relieved to have him well again after his operation by Dr Alan Appelbe at University Hospital Geelong. Jose is ready to resume his education and keen to reassure future patients.

“I will tell them that there is always hope and they should not be scared to have the treatment.”



Marquita

“I will be very, very happy.”

Marquita, 23, was feeling a bit apprehensive but very optimistic about having her aortic valve replacement surgery in December at University Hospital Geelong.

Looking ahead, she said, *“When I get better I will be very, very happy.”* Weeks after her remarkable recovery, Marquita was indeed very happy, and celebrating at a beachside picnic with fellow patients and East Timor Hearts Fund volunteer cardiologist Alan Appelbe. She returned home in time for Christmas, ready to make the most of her new life, with her new heart.



Filomeno

“No amount of words can express my extreme gratitude.”

Filomeno is one half of our first 'dad and son double'. We gave his son, Paulo, then 13, life-saving surgery in Australia in 2016. This encouraged Filomeno to have a routine check-up with our volunteer medical team, which identified a potentially deadly tumour. After highly successful surgery at Royal Melbourne Hospital in September, Filomeno returned to his family of six children and wife Regina. *“At first I felt a little afraid, knowing I have such a serious heart condition,”* Filomeno said.

“But knowing about the excellent care that Paulo received, I knew that I’d be well looked after in Australia. May God richly bless you and protect you so that you can continue to save more lives in my dear homeland, Timor-Leste.”



Timotio

“Now I want to study to be nurse or doctor.”

Severe heart disease had made daily life a struggle for young science student Timotio, 21. His heart raced, he was breathless, and his symptoms were worsening. *“I had no energy to work, study and play with my friends,”* Timotio said. In September, Timotio had a high-tech, mitral balloon procedure.

“I want to say thank you very much to the doctors, donors, all the people who have helped me. Now I want to continue my study, go to university and be a nurse or doctor,” Timotio said.

Our thanks to doctors Virag Kushwaha and Simon Eggleton, our partners Eastern Heart Clinic and Prince of Wales Private Hospital and health support worker Ricky Flavio, who accompanied Timotio to Australia.



Meliana

“Thank you very much to the doctors, donors and everyone else who has helped me.”

Mum of seven Meliana was all smiles within days of having a life-saving, mitral balloon procedure at Royal Melbourne Hospital in early August. Along with raising her young family, Meliana hopes to go to university.



Paulo

“I am forever grateful to those who have provided me with a second chance of life and I can assure you that I will make each day count.”

If Paulo's smiling face is familiar, it's because last year you helped to raise more than \$20,000 to give him a life-saving heart procedure. Paulo's life was transformed – he went back to school and was playing sport again. But our volunteer medical team were confident they could get an even better result with follow-up surgery, and so in December Paulo came to Australia again for surgery at University Hospital Geelong.

Chair report

Upward journey

Somewhere along a precarious goat track on the ascent to Mt Ramelau, Timor-Leste's highest peak, buffeted by howling winds strong enough to knock you off your feet and weighed down by a 20-kilo backpack, I snatched a moment to contemplate leadership and my commitment to Timor-Leste.

The inaugural Trans-Timor Trek is definitely one of the more unusual tasks I've been called upon to undertake as board chair. Yet in many ways, it really embodies what we are about as an organisation: persisting against the odds, going where no-one's been before and walking by the side of our friends, the Timorese.

As an organisation, we have also been on the up and up in 2017. In small steps and sometimes in the face of challenges, the transformation of our organisation has continued.

Significant personnel changes at a governance and management level stand out as one of the most significant achievements of 2017. After an extensive recruitment process, we were more than thrilled to recruit Stuart Thomson to the role of CEO. Stuart's experience living and working in Timor-Leste, and his previous service with major NGOs Oxfam and World Vision stands him in good stead for the role.

With Stuart at the helm our organisation has already taken big strides in implementing our strategic plan. This includes strengthening and expanding our preventative penicillin program and laying the groundwork for our first ever in-country surgical mission.

I would like to thank interim CEO Mike Gregory also for overseeing our organisation during the recruitment process.

New personnel have also considerably strengthened our board. In 2017 we completed our transition to a skills-based board, with two rounds of targeted recruitment. Five new directors joined our board – Brett Sutton, who is Victoria's deputy chief health officer; experienced international development professional Julianne Scenna; Dr Vijaya Joshi, from the Menzies School of Health Research; senior public servant Nick Oats, who has extensive expertise in Timor-Leste; and chartered accountant Paul Smith.



A number of directors stepped up into significant new responsibilities as committee chairs this year. Directors also put considerable time and energy into strategic planning, training and in some cases, personally funded trips to Timor-Leste to get up close and personal with our work. I thank them for their commitment – a board chair could not ask for more dedicated colleagues.

Thanks are also due to long-standing company secretary and finance director Philip Fitzpatrick, who returned with his family to his native Ireland, after a four-year stint with our organisation. Foundation director Ana Saldanha, a font of knowledge on the Timorese culture and landscape and a tireless advocate for our patients, also retired from board service in 2017 to concentrate on her volunteer patient support coordinator role.

To our volunteer and paid staff and all of our supporters, I offer my heartfelt thanks. It's your dedication and passion that allows us to continually strive for and achieve greater heights.

Ingrid Svendsen
2017 Board Chair

Director highlights

It's been another exciting year East Timor Hearts Fund. Here some of our 2017 directors reflect on their personal highlights.



Bill Appleby

2017 was another great year for ETHF. From a personal perspective, the highlight for me was to visit Timor-Leste and see firsthand the challenges facing the Timorese people. I especially enjoyed my

time in the clinic meeting families and working with our highly skilled and dedicated team.



Brett Sutton

Seeing Timor-Leste's first (and as yet only) cardiologist Dr Andre Monteiro, playing a more active role in our program following his ETHF scholarship two years ago. The scholarship with

MonashHeart supported Dr Monteiro to further his skills in diagnosing patients with heart disease, giving them a better chance at successful treatment and recovery. It's been a highlight to help build capacity as part of our commitment to support Timor-Leste in tackling rheumatic and other heart disease.



Ingrid Svendsen

Despite the pain, completing the inaugural Trans-Timor Trek was a definite highlight. For the board and organisation, it was great to recruit some excellent new directors, completing our transition to a skills-based board,

and to see our talented new CEO Stuart Thomson begin to lay the foundations for future growth. It was also an honour this year to meet with our patron HE Xanana Gusmao during his quick visit to Melbourne.



Nick Oats

As a newcomer, my highlight was simply becoming exposed to the range of preventative health, education and surgery activities the organisation is engaged in, and how the efforts of our

wonderful volunteers and staff can truly change the lives of our close neighbours and friends in Timor-Leste.



Nicki Patten

A highlight for me was returning to Timor-Leste, where I got to see our clinics first-hand and make connections with other NGOs working in the country.

Real benefits in seeing our work with my own eyes hand and meeting the medical teams and the hospital contacts. Seeing the faith that Timorese place in our doctors and the care and attention taken with patients and their families.



Vijaya Joshi

In my first year as a director at East Timor Hearts Fund I am proud of the breadth and depth of our work in Australia and Timor-Leste. On a personal note, I was very excited to participate

in the 2017 Run Melbourne alongside some of supporters and patients.

2017 director attendance

| Directors | Eligible to attend | Attended |
|-----------------------|--------------------|----------|
| Ingrid Svendsen | 7 | 7 |
| Bill Appleby | 7 | 5 |
| Philip Fitzpatrick | 3 | 3 |
| Ana Saldanha | 2 | 0 |
| Sarah Danne | 7 | 6 |
| Nicki Patten | 7 | 6 |
| Sophie Clarkson | 7 | 6 |
| Prof. Andrew Cochrane | 7 | 5 |
| Dr Brett Sutton | 4 | 3 |
| Julianne Scenna | 4 | 3 |
| Nick Oats | 4 | 4 |
| Dr Vijaya Joshi | 4 | 3 |
| Paul Smith | 3 | 2 |

Trekkers reach new heights

“Whose idea was this?” The East Timor Hearts Fund team must have asked themselves this question many times as they tackled the inaugural 135-kilometre Trans-Timor Trek in July 2017. Why would anyone voluntarily endure intense humidity and howling gales to lug 20-kilogram backpacks up Timor-Leste's highest peak?

The answers may have varied with the personal baggage each trekker brought, but they had some key motivations in common. The urge to explore unknown territory, both physically, in Timor-Leste's rugged landscape, and emotionally, by pushing beyond their own limits, was driving them on.

But the most powerful driver was their shared passion for improving the heart health of Timor-Leste's people by raising funds and awareness of heart disease in Timor-Leste and the work of East Timor Hearts Fund.

For trek leader Mick Stuth, the Trans-Timor Trek really began in 2003 – although he didn't realise it back then. Mick is both a paramedic and the director of operations for Earthtrails Expeditions, which specialises in small group, adventurous travel that supports local economies.

In 2003, Mick served in Timor-Leste as part of a civil-military liaison operation for the Australian Defence Force. Mick was impressed by the fragility, optimism and resilience of the people, who were rebuilding their new country from scratch after years of Indonesian occupation. *“I felt that this was an opportunity to get to know the locals and try to understand the great disparity I was witnessing,”* he said. *“I promised myself that I would one day come back to this new nation to assist the local communities in some way that adds true value.”* Mick's involvement with the East

Timor Hearts Fund combines his passion for healthcare and his commitment to supporting Timor-Leste. This sparked the idea of the Trans-Timor Trek fund-raiser. Mick envisaged it as an “exploratory” expedition that was arguably tougher than the Kokoda Trail on such measures as the track (sometimes non-existent), climate (extremely variable), altitude (higher) and distance (longer).

The inaugural expedition comprised 13 trekkers, including East Timor Hearts Fund board chair Ingrid Svendsen, led by Mick and an expedition medic. The trekkers carried their own packs and Earthtrails Expeditions employed 12 local staff to navigate and manage logistics such as campsites, water and food.

Starting outside the capital of Dili, on the north coast, the group trekked 135 kilometres across Timor-Leste to the Timor Sea, via the summit of Mt Ramelau, the country's highest peak at 2986 metres. Along the way they crossed rivers, clambered up near-vertical tracks, sweated through stifling humidity and endured freezing temperatures and buffeting winds. A veteran of many physically challenging events, Ingrid Svendsen rated the trek *“the toughest hiking I could conceive of”*.

Fellow trekker Kerri Howie also found it enormously demanding, but deeply rewarding. The former Navy medic feared that she wouldn't be able to



complete the trip. *“But just being in Timor changed my mindset from, ‘I can't do this’, to ‘I'm here for a purpose much bigger than myself’,”* she said. *“It's an absolutely spectacular country, with so much potential.”*

Kerri said the trek was a perfect opportunity to combine a physical challenge with helping others – and help herself. *“Since leaving the Navy in 2001 I've struggled with major clinical depression,”* she said. The Trans-Timor Trek was a healing experience. *“It's helping me find the lost parts of my soul. Timor-Leste is a magical place. Although it's very poor,*



there is an overall sense of kindness, love, inclusiveness and respect," she said. "It's been the most beautiful, hospitable, loving and happy country I've visited."

Nurse Louise Burke also found the trek profoundly moving. While she remembers stunning mountain-top sunrises and friendly villagers, the experience also caused her to reflect on her practice as a nurse.

"Sometimes we complain at work about things like not having enough supplies or equipment," Louise said. "It's not until you see how other

people live that you realise how much we take for granted what we do have.

"Many people we saw on the trek are a few days by foot to the nearest health care. We came across health clinics, the only medical facilities for days, that were closed because there were no trained staff.

"I left Timor touched by these amazing people and wanting to help make a difference in their lives. I hope other nurses will jump on board and support the trek. It's a fantastic experience and a practical way to support our neighbours in Timor-Leste."

The inaugural Trans-Timor Trek raised 18,000. Thank you to all who supported us. Earthtrails Expeditions is taking bookings for next year. More information: earthtrails.com.au

Financial overview

Finance report

In 2017 East Timor Hearts Fund provided heart surgery or procedures in Australia for eight patients. While continuing to save lives, the organisation also focused its efforts on prevention and education.

Our rheumatic heart disease program worked to prevent further deaths, as well as educating health professionals and the community on preventing, detecting and treating this potentially deadly disease. These prevention and education activities help to save lives and are also a more cost-effective way of tackling rheumatic heart disease.

I am pleased to present to you this summary of our financial statements for the year ended 31 December 2017. Independent auditors Ernst & Young (EY) have audited the financial statements, which have been prepared in accordance with Australian Accounting Standards.

The overall deficit for the period was \$159,795, resulting in net assets of \$1,006,215 at the end of the financial year. We successfully implemented our investment management strategy and have partnered with JB Were to administer the investment fund. The majority of our assets are held in cash and will be used to pay for medical surgery, travel expenses of patients and volunteers and activities related to our

emerging rheumatic heart disease program. It will also pay for expenses associated with the operations of the organisation. We are also looking at social and ethical investments, which will provide even greater returns on donations to allow the organisation to further increase its life-saving work.

This year we employed our second staff member, a part-time operations manager, to assist the CEO. However, like much of East Timor Hearts Fund's operations, the finance functions of the organisation rely largely on volunteer effort. We benefitted greatly from the skills and expertise of our volunteer finance and audit committee, and particularly our voluntary finance manager Anbu Mohan. Sincere thanks to Anbu, and to my fellow committee members.

Paul Smith
2017 Finance and Audit Committee Chair

Income summary 2015-2017

| | 2017 | 2016 | 2015 |
|------------------------|------------------|--------------------|------------------|
| General giving | \$200,422 | \$1,139,015 | \$64,583 |
| Trust and foundations | \$23,593 | \$38,576 | \$30,730 |
| Corporate sponsorships | – | \$7,273 | \$83,700 |
| Total | \$224,015 | \$1,184,864 | \$179,013 |

Key expenditure items

| | 2017 | 2016 | 2015 |
|--------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|
| Salaries and wages | \$127,118 | \$99,153 | \$38,646 |
| Patient costs | \$182,723 | \$225,998 | \$197,886 |
| Total | \$309,841 | \$325,151 | \$236,532 |

Summarised statement of profit and loss

| | 2017 | 2016 |
|--------------------------|------------------|--------------------|
| Income | | |
| Donations | \$224,015 | \$1,184,864 |
| Bank interest | \$10,131 | \$24,457 |
| Total revenue | \$234,146 | \$1,209,321 |
| Expenditure | | |
| Subscriptions | \$5,126 | \$2,014 |
| Patient support services | \$182,723 | \$225,998 |
| Insurance | \$1,815 | \$4,436 |
| Bank charges | \$827 | \$262 |
| Promotional expenses | \$17,779 | \$18,301 |
| Other expenses | \$58,523 | \$12,774 |
| Employee expenses | \$127,118 | \$99,153 |
| Total expenditure | \$393,911 | \$362,938 |

Summarised statement of financial position

| | 2017 | 2016 |
|----------------------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| Current assets | | |
| Cash and cash equivalents | \$1,069,194 | \$1,185,938 |
| Receivables | \$7,676 | \$9,460 |
| Prepayments | \$4,184 | \$17,152 |
| Total current assets | \$1,081,054 | \$1,212,550 |
| Total assets | \$1,081,054 | \$1,212,550 |
| Current liabilities | | |
| Trade payables | - | - |
| Accrued expenses | \$74,839 | \$49,300 |
| Total current liabilities | \$ 74,839 | \$49,300 |
| Total liabilities | \$74,839 | \$49,300 |
| Net assets | \$1,006,215 | \$1,163,250 |
| Equity | | |
| Retained earnings | \$1,006,215 | \$1,163,250 |
| Total equity | \$1,006,215 | \$1,163,250 |

The summarised financial statements have been derived from the audited financial statements of East Timor Hearts Fund for the year ended 31 December 2017.





Healthy outcomes a delight

The medical team has had a productive and rewarding year – a highlight of which was seeing our past patients now leading healthy lives.

We screened 424 patients across three rounds of screening clinics in Timor-Leste, with multiple clinics in Dili and outreach visits to the remote districts of Baucau, Maliana and Oecusse.

In addition to our usual complement of adult cardiologists, we were delighted to have the support of Dr Ari Horton, a paediatric cardiologist (who is profiled on page 19). Dr Horton has added to the team much needed expertise in diagnosing and treating younger patients.

As always, the clinics identified many patients needing surgery in Australia. They also gave us the opportunity to review many of the 100-plus patients who have had procedures, almost all of whom have excellent long-term results. It was especially gratifying to see Arminda Soares. She was so frail and underweight at 12, before heart surgery five years ago, and is now a happy 18-year-old. This is one of the truly delightful aspects of our work for us all.

The year has seen a steady flow of patients to Australia, with four open heart and four per cutaneous procedures (such as mitral balloon procedures). In all cases we

had excellent technical results, which means that we have likely saved lives for the long term.

The administrative side of our in-country clinics goes from strength to strength, due to the expert guidance of volunteer Nicki Mock.

In addition to our direct clinical work, we have engaged with partners in Timor-Leste to support local expertise; arranged for the donation of a very valuable portable ultrasound machine; and enhanced our relationships with Dili's major public hospital, Hospital Nacional Guido Valadares, where we now carry out our clinics. We have also partnered to undertake ground-breaking scientific research into the prevalence of rheumatic heart disease in Timor-Leste, with studies due for publication in major peer-reviewed journals in 2018.

Seeing the positive impacts of our work on so many young lives has made 2017 a most satisfying year.

My thanks to all of you who helped make it happen.

Dr Noel Bayley
Honorary medical adviser

Frail Arminda now full of life



In 2013, at age 12, Arminda Soares was fading away, too ill from rheumatic heart disease to have an appetite. Arminda's heart valve had become chronically inflamed and closed to a pinhole.

East Timor Hearts Fund's volunteer medical specialists diagnosed Arminda's condition in Timor-Leste and the organisation brought her to Melbourne, where leading cardiologist Professor Richard Harper performed the mitral balloon procedure that saved her life. Professor Harper, an Australian pioneer of the procedure, and the medical team at MonashHeart, donated their services. At that time, Arminda was the youngest and smallest patient he had ever dealt with. He wasn't sure if the catheter – inserted with a special balloon that was inflated to widen the heart valve – would fit in Arminda's femoral vein, and an open-heart surgery team was on stand-by.

But the surgery was highly successful and the day after, she was walking around the block, breathing normally for the first time in years. Arminda, the youngest of 12 children, was soon back at school in Timor-Leste.

She can now walk long distances without difficulty and help her mother around the house.

"I'm really thankful to the doctors for helping me through many years," she said recently, "And today, years after the operation, Dr Bayley was here and gave me a call to have a check-up so I am very thankful."

The fund's honorary medical adviser, Dr Noel Bayley, was very pleased to see that Arminda was thriving.

"Arminda's special because she was really small when she was done and she was very high risk and everybody was desperately worried about her procedure because there was a real possibility it would not turn out well."

"So it was very gratifying to see her. It's astonishing to see that it's been five years – time flies. She's gone from being a little waif to a young woman who is doing very well, so that was hugely gratifying."



Our people

Stuart Thomson, CEO 'Can do' culture drew CEO

A scan of Stuart Thomson's CV confirms why East Timor Hearts Fund appointed him as CEO in early 2017.

Stuart spent many years with World Vision and Oxfam, leading teams and running health advocacy and development programs in Indonesia, Sri Lanka, Tanzania, Kenya, Uganda, Nepal, India, Philippines and Timor-Leste. He experienced first-hand the challenges facing resource-poor countries in dealing with overwhelming health problems. Later, back in Australia with the National Disability Insurance Agency, Stuart's work equipped him with the essential skills for connecting our charity with our supporters in the digital age. Stuart was also a trained nurse, adding a medical dimension to his portfolio.

Stuart was drawn to East Timor Hearts Fund by the great passion and drive of its volunteers, staff and supporters for making a real and lasting change in people's lives. *"I wanted to be a part of it. It's a perfect fit,"* he said.

East Timor Hearts Fund work also resonated with him personally. *"Several years ago, my family and I unsuccessfully tried to bring a four-year-old relative of my Tanzanian-born wife to Australia for heart treatment. Sadly, she passed away before we could arrange help,"* he said. *"This shook our family and shakes me today that an easily treatable condition can result in so much tragedy."*

"The contrast with the treatment my own young son received when diagnosed with a heart murmur was stark. It's a tale of two countries, only one hour's flying time from each other, that such a twist of fate can occur. I want to contribute to ensure



that this injustice becomes a thing of the past."

Stuart's overall goal is to help guide the fund through its transition into a medium-sized organisation that conducts a growing range of heart disease-related activities across screening, treatment, research, capacity-building and prevention.

His first year has confirmed his early impressions of the core factors driving the organisation's continuing success. *"Our fantastic volunteers really are our heart. Combined with a few highly skilled employees, we are a formidable force in tackling heart disease in Timor-Leste."*

East Timor Hearts Fund people are "doers, not talkers", he says. *"My years in international community development taught me that a community will welcome you if you are prepared to roll up your sleeves and help. Not just hold workshops or focus groups but actually do something."*

Another strength is the organisation's approach of fostering partnerships in Australia and Timor-Leste. *"We make the most of our relationships with individual supporters, medical providers and corporations in Australia. In Timor-Leste we work exclusively through partnerships with the government of Timor-Leste and local NGOs."*

For Stuart, after all those years of travelling overseas, there's no place like home. *"I'm a very committed father of two small children. And beyond work, I love a good movie or the beach for a few hours for a swim, snorkel or surf. And I do enjoy a good potter in the garden!"*



Lin Jong, ambassador Footy pro passionate about our cause



AFL champion Lin Jong says “selfless” is a term often brought up in football. *“Passing the ball to another player to kick a goal, putting your body on the line. All these actions, in football terms, are selfless.”*

But the Western Bulldogs utility says East Timor Hearts Fund has redefined “selfless” for him. *“This has a whole new meaning to me when you think of this great charity, that you have people giving up their time, effort and expertise to simply help others, with nothing in return.”*

“These kinds of people are why I feel so passionately about this cause. They inspire me to help others less fortunate.”

Appointed an ambassador this year, Lin Jong is keen to use his profile as an athlete to help spread awareness of East Timor Hearts Fund’s life-saving work. He has met many of patients and witnessed their recovery. He cites having a kick at the with Paulo Nascimento, then 13, just two weeks after the young sports fan’s heart

surgery last year, as an example. *“Now he’s back at school, working on his dream of studying to become an engineer!”*

Although Lin was born in Australia in 1993, his family history ties him to Timor-Leste. Lin’s father, Vitor, was born in Indonesian-controlled East Timor and fled in 1978 when he was only 18, to escape the civil war there. His father and mother, Faye, eventually emigrated to Australia in 1983, where Lin was born. He hopes to visit the now-independent Timor-Leste with East Timor Hearts Fund soon.

This background has grounded his attitude about career-curbing setbacks, like incurring a broken collarbone last year in an elimination final against West Coast Eagles in Perth. Most footy players would have focused on the excruciating pain and professional impacts. But while Lin remembers the injury vividly, he emerged feeling motivated to help others who don’t have access

to the first-class medical treatment he was afforded.

Flying across the country and receiving surgery the next day for his broken collarbone, Lin was struck by the contrast with people in Timor-Leste, who lack access to even basic health care.

“A child could have a life-threatening disease and the family would be unable to access medical care to detect, manage or treat it.”

“It’s moments like the West Coast game that put things into perspective for me, and make me consider how lucky I truly have it.”

“East Timor now has its independence, and things are improving all the time. But there are still many people, including young people with heart disease, who can’t get the medical help they need.”

“I’m proud to be an ambassador for East Timor Hearts Fund and I’m committed to supporting their amazing work.”

Anbu Mohan, volunteer finance manager

Expert input adds value, multiplies benefits

Anbu Mohan can reassure supporters of East Timor Hearts Fund that their donations in cash or kind are well used for the cause. Anbu's confidence comes from inside knowledge, having volunteered her expertise as a chartered accountant to help set up systems to ensure that the organisation's accounting – and accountability – is robust. She has also played an important role on the board finance and audit committee.

Anbu first became directly involved in August 2017. A personal connection to the organisation's volunteer finance and audit committee chair sparked her initial interest, and she felt that the cause was worthwhile. *"East Timor Hearts Fund looked professional as well, and they needed my skills, hence I just wanted to volunteer. I've been in the profession for more than 30 years and I wanted to give something back to the community,"* she says.

"I was impressed with the great work East Timor Hearts Fund was doing. I am proud to be connected with this organisation."

Anbu applied her knowledge of 'end to end' systems to cover all the areas required to make the organisation efficient, compliant and transparent in finance management. Her efforts are saving precious administration time in activities such as payments processing. *"Now instead of taking an hour, a day's payments can be done in ten minutes. It eases the process and doesn't require as much time and energy to complete your work."*

Although she has since been appointed a management accountant of TIC Marketing Solutions, a company which project manages the distribution of marketing requirements for the retail industry, she still makes time for her volunteer work, including staying abreast of regulatory requirements governing not-for-profit organisations. She finds that some of this knowledge gained through working for East Timor Hearts Fund is proving useful in her current job.

Anbu encourages anyone with specialist skills and the desire to help save young lives in Timor-Leste

to contact East Timor Hearts Fund. She can also reassure donors that their financial contributions are always well 'invested'.

"The money is utilised completely for the purpose for which we collect it, and we really keep strict records and the information available is always passed onto the donors," Anbu says.

"Plus, we do around 10 operations every year and we've got a really good back up of doctors and medical facilities who partner with us to help us do a lot of work. And our many volunteers, through their pro bono work, create even more value than the donations we receive. The cause you are donating for is definitely getting done."

Between her job and volunteer commitments, Anbu has less spare time lately, but when she can indulge in hobbies, they may be creative (intricate beadwork) or calming (practising reiki). She also loves to travel.



"We do around 10 operations every year and we've got a really good back up of doctors and medical facilities who partner with us to help us do a lot of work. And our many volunteers, through their pro bono work, create even more value than the donations we receive."

Dr Ari Horton, medical volunteer

Tackling the reality of rheumatic heart disease in Timor-Leste with care



Dr Ari Horton's introduction to the in-country work of East Timor Hearts Fund was swift and confronting. Only weeks after joining the volunteer medical team he flew into Dili in June 2017 as part of a screening visit.

"On that first day, I was faced with a corridor full of children and families, waiting to see me", he says. "Almost every one of them was symptomatic and diagnosed by the team with rheumatic heart disease or congenital heart disease at an advanced stage."

Those first clinics revealed the desperate reality of heart disease in Timor-Leste.

Ari completed advanced training in paediatrics and paediatric cardiology in Australia and has worked in developing countries such as Myanmar and Nepal. But he found the situation in Timor-Leste particularly compelling.

Timor-Leste has one of the highest rates of rheumatic heart disease in the world, with one in 28 children suffering from the condition. But the country has limited access to specialist services and treatment options.

East Timor Hearts Fund is working collaboratively with local and international organisations to build capacity in Timor-Leste, as part of its commitment to heart health prevention, research, education and training. Ari is at the forefront of the organisation's expansion of its paediatric activities in Timor-Leste, which will include its first ever paediatric heart surgery mission next year.

As well as his clinical skills, Ari contributes to the organisation in areas such as advocacy, education of local staff and families and clinical research.

Creativity and humanity are important tools in Ari's paediatric medical kit.

"Every interaction with Timorese children and families is special. At the



core of my practice I try to bring the human connection and kindness back into medicine," he says.

"A smile, song or story can be invaluable. I aim to make the environment as child friendly and supportive as possible.

"No matter how difficult or sad the situation, we always strive to provide care that is family-centred and culturally appropriate. We work very closely with local medical and healthcare workers. We rely on each other as a team to provide the best possible care."

This compassionate and sensitive approach came to the fore during that first screening clinic, when Ari and the team had many discussions with parents regarding the tragic reality of their child's condition and prognosis.

"I understand the enormity of the situation. It is a momentary interaction with a foreign doctor, in another language, with a life-long impact.

"Sometimes there is little time to build rapport and trust, but I find that honesty and empathy can help reduce the barriers and allow us to share a mutual language as we try to address together what the diagnosis will mean for them and their child."

The parents never give up hope, he says, but also understand the realities of life

and death in Timor-Leste. *"They always ask: 'Can we do something to make our child's life better?'"*

"Sharing bad news with parents is one of the hardest parts of my job but also one of the most important."

During that clinical visit, Ari says he *"went home every day physically and emotionally exhausted from the enormity of how much need there is in Timor-Leste"*. This spurs on his commitment to the task ahead.

Ari is proud to be one of East Timor Hearts Fund's volunteer medics, who he describes as *"an incredible team of committed individuals whose skill and experience, care and consideration are focused on a brighter future"*.

"Every day there is opportunity to change people's lives," Ari says.

"The team is incredibly effective and efficient in using the limited funds and resources available. They make a difference for individual patients and also collaborate to promote a long-lasting impact on the heart health of future generations in Timor-Leste.

"East Timor Hearts Fund is working tirelessly to increase the funds and resources available to support this valuable work and is dependent on donations to continue to do so."



Fundraisers get hearts moving

Running, walking, golf, swimming and mountain trekking – East Timor Hearts Fund supporters are an active mob.

At the Run Melbourne fun run event in July our VIPs (Very Important Participants) included event ambassadors, Western Bulldogs' players Libby Birch and Lin Jong, and former patient Bete Nabem. This was Bete's first fun run, an unimaginable feat before her heart surgery. Her flight to Melbourne was sponsored by our great friends, Russell Kennedy Lawyers and Smith+Tracey Architects, who joined in on the big day. While our runners enjoyed chilly winter weather, in the tropical heat of Dili, our supporters took part in the second annual Run Melbourne Dili event.

Our inaugural Trans-Timor Trek in August was an extreme experience for our 13-strong team, including our East Timor Hearts Fund chair Ingrid Svendsen, and led by Australian Earth Trails Expeditions. Participants trekked 135 kilometres between Dili on the north coast and Betano on the south coast, raising funds and awareness along the way. Their conquest of Mt Ramelau, Timor-Leste's highest peak is featured on page 10-11. Ingrid's trek updates inspired a fundraising initiative by Leeming Senior High School Education Support Centre in Perth. Students, teachers, friends and families raised \$1200 towards the Trans-Timor Trek tally.

Scores of golf lovers turned out again for our annual Swing into Action to Mend a Broken Heart golf day at the Sanctuary Lakes course in October. The team from ANZ Australia snatched the coveted perpetual trophy from last year's winners, rival bank NAB, and the day raised more than \$16,000. A big thanks to all the players, and our sponsors ANZ, 8bit, ConnectPM, Intech3 and Plan Management Partners.

Our first ever photographic exhibition, 'Fuan Bot: A Collection of Images from Timor-Leste', was a stunning in every sense. Volunteer photographers Mathew Lynn and Susanna Rossi contributed images for the show, at St Vincent's Hospital Melbourne art gallery. A massive thanks to Mat and Susanna, and also Dr Louise Creati.

Other notable efforts include a courageous effort by our volunteer Paul Hoffman, whose fund-raising, solo swim from Eastern Beach in Geelong to Middle Brighton Baths was aborted due to a shoulder injury.

In December, your overwhelming response to our fundraising campaign to support our first ever paediatric surgical mission to Timor-Leste, Operation GoodHearts, topped our \$10,000 target in just five days. And you kept on giving, raising \$14,000! These funds will send our volunteer surgical team to Timor-Leste in 2018, to mend broken hearts alongside their Timorese colleagues.



Your impact

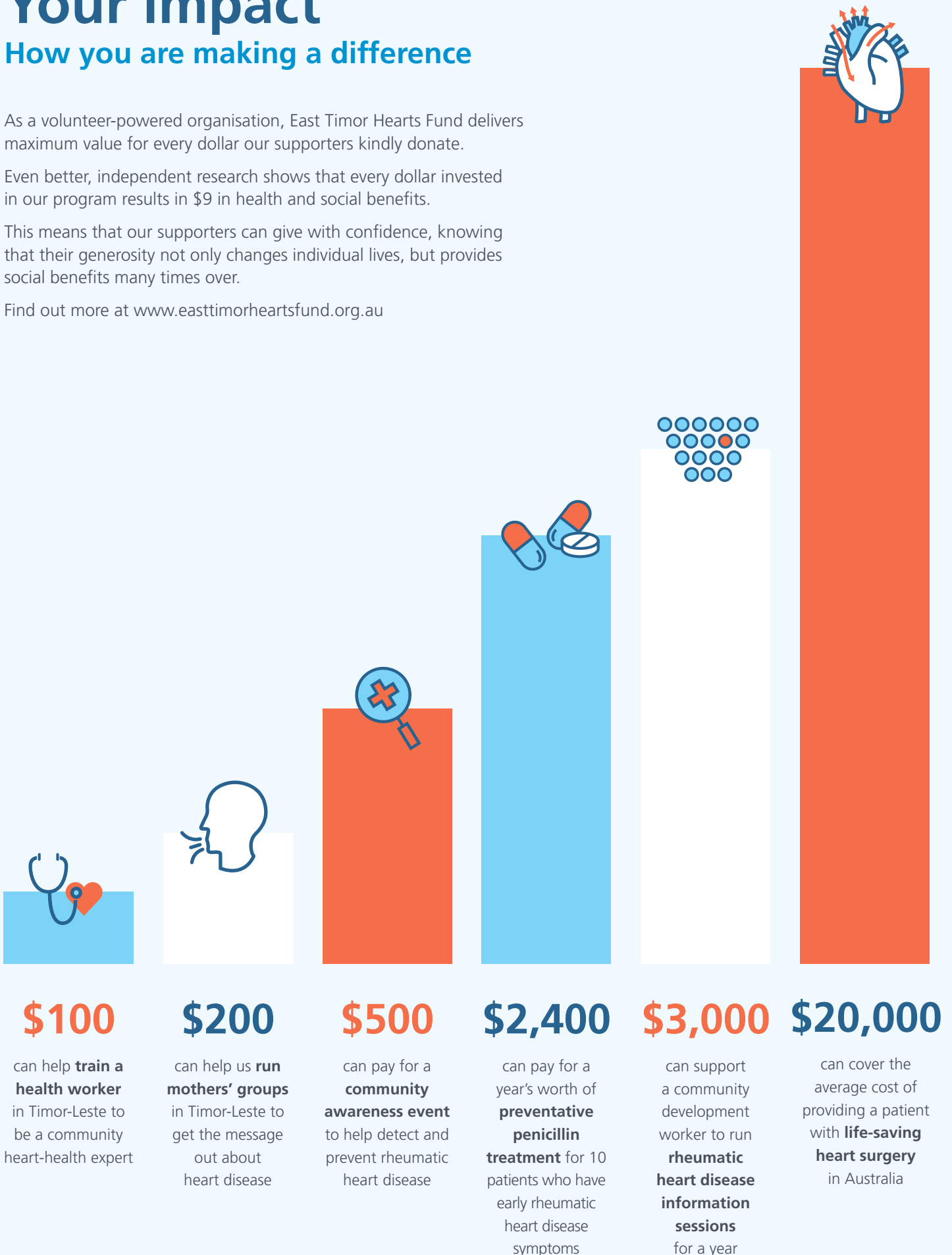
How you are making a difference

As a volunteer-powered organisation, East Timor Hearts Fund delivers maximum value for every dollar our supporters kindly donate.

Even better, independent research shows that every dollar invested in our program results in \$9 in health and social benefits.

This means that our supporters can give with confidence, knowing that their generosity not only changes individual lives, but provides social benefits many times over.

Find out more at www.easttimorheartsfund.org.au



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