

A Word from the President:

The most important issue to arise this year has been the advice from Australia's Department of Foreign Affairs that the Indonesian authorities will no longer allow any foreign medical practitioners/teams to operate there. It is understood that this emanated from the Indonesian Government's commitment some three years ago to provide universal health care from locally accredited medical personnel. Since OSSAA was established in 2002 there have been 60 trips to Indonesian hospitals mainly in Cancar and Halilulik, but also Lela, Ruteng, Kefemenanu, Soe, Naob, Larantuka, and Waigapu. Thousands of needy patients have received life changing/saving surgery of the highest order and hundreds of staff trained. It is a history for which all participating OSSAA team members can feel rightfully proud.....and fondly remember those brilliant smiles and messages of appreciation, the wonderful nuns, friendships formed, training breakthroughs, bruises acquired travelling long distances over difficult roads, sleeping in the wards, and 'running' after eating dodgy food off hand carts.



Effort is being made to identify alternate places in the region where people are in need of our teams.

We remain committed to annually providing 2 plastics team visits into Timor Leste. In August a team headed by Mark Moore visited Dili Hospital, and as this newsletter is being written, Mark is leading another team into Baucau.

There has been a 'changing of the guard'. Patrick Markwick-Smith completed 3 years as President, which is the constitutional limit for this position. At our AGM in October, I was elected President to replace Patrick. Barbara Flaum retired from the committee and her place has been taken by Connie

Granozzio. Many thanks to Barbara and Patrick (who will continue to serve on the committee as immediate past president) for their excellent contributions. Admin Officer Donna Fitzgerald has taken up the role of Secretary.

At our annual luncheon in June, we had the pleasure of listening to guest speaker His Excellency Hieu Van Le AO, Governor of South Australia, who spoke about fleeing Vietnam for Australia.



At the luncheon the Romeo family was awarded honorary corporate membership for its continuing generous support of OSSAA's film fund raising events....another film event is being planned for February.

In October, we were pleased to sponsor team members Joy Booth, Cath Coombe, Margaret Maloney and Helen van der Jeugd at the Royal Australian College of Surgeons Global Health Symposium in Melbourne....report herein.

We are planning to build on past achievements with new alliances. Any help that can be provided to that end would be gratefully received.

All the very best for the festive season and for a healthy and productive 2016

Stephen Baker

TRIP

Timor Leste

Dili

On 1 August Dr Mark Moore led a plastic and reconstructive team comprising surgeon Dr Vani Prasad Atluri, anaesthetist Dr Andrew Wallace, theatre nurses Srs Joy Booth and Margaret Malone, and speech pathologist Celine Lai to the national hospital in Dili. They were joined by local plastic surgical trainee Dr Joao Ximenes and speech pathologist Ms Alotu da Costa Sarmiento.

Mark recalls that this is the 41st surgical mission to Timor Leste since March 2000 covering 851 completed cleft surgical procedures.

The team accomplished 54 consultations and 28 surgical procedures, comprising 16 cleft lip/palate, 3 burns contractures and 9 hands/lesions.

Training of doctors, nurses and health care workers is a major component of each visit. Pleasing improvements have taken place since the last visit in the management of surgical cases and sterilisation procedures. Celina Lai again helped children with clefts and their parents in speech improvement and in the feeding of babies where suction is often difficult.



Dr Joao, local staff, Margaret Maloney and Dr Andrew Wallace



Bilateral cleft lip and palate – before and after primary lip repair



The burn contracture in 2014 of 2015 healed skin and maintenance of contracture release.

RACS SYMPOSIUM

On Monday 26th & Tuesday 27th October OSSAA sponsored Marg Maloney, Joy Booth, Cath Coombe and Helen van der Jeugd to attend the RACS Global Health Symposium in Melbourne. Surgeons, anaesthetists, health economists and public health specialists from 16 countries came together in Melbourne to discuss the major barriers and strategies to improving access to safe, affordable surgical and anaesthesia care in low and middle income countries within our Asia pacific region.

The Symposium highlighted that safe surgery and anaesthesia is an indispensable part of healthcare and needs to be incorporated into existing health plans. And surgery must be affordable. Issues such as the challenges in building a health workforce and strategies for retaining clinicians in less developed countries and resource-poor environments were a highlight of the open discussion sessions.

It was eye opening to find out how far some patients travel to have surgery. The key themes that underpinned all sessions were the need for strong local leadership and that streamlined data collection against agreed global surgery indicators is essential for planning, and persuading health ministers to allocate resources, and for measuring success.

Attending the symposium was a great experience and gave OSSAA members insight into the diverse range of challenges throughout the Asia pacific region. The opportunity to network and share on-the-ground experiences with a wide range of health professionals and country representatives was a great benefit for the OSSAA group. It was reassuring to know that OSSAA follows international guidelines by ensuring staff are qualified specialists in their field and using appropriate monitoring that may not be available in the host hospital to ensure safe surgery and anaesthesia. *Joy Booth*



Stop Press: Due to a recent bout of ill health, Vice President Doug Omond OAM is retiring from our committee after 12 magnificent years of fundraising and service. We wish him a speedy recovery.

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 **Overseas Specialist Surgical Association of Australia**