

## International development leader named as new CEO

1 February 2017

Seasoned international development program leader Stuart Thomson will join East Timor Hearts Fund this month as chief executive officer, board chair Ingrid Svendsen today announced.

“This appointment comes at a pivotal time for East Timor Hearts Fund,” Ms Svendsen said.

“In the next few years our work will expand significantly as we provide life-saving heart surgery in Australia for more patients than ever, while tackling the root causes of poor heart health in Timor-Leste with prevention, research and education initiatives.

“The board is delighted to have someone with Stuart’s experience to join us, as we move from charity start-up to a mature, development-focussed organisation.”

A trained nurse, who has lived and worked in Timor-Leste and other developing countries with organisations such as Oxfam, Mr Thomson’s experience includes helping establish World Vision’s United Nations award-winning Child Health Now campaign, implemented in more than 40 countries.

Mr Thomson said he was thrilled at the opportunity to build and lead an organisation that was not only mobilising support to “mend broken hearts” but was also focussed on preventative work.

“I’m really looking forward to helping a great organisation reach its full potential,” Mr Thomson said.

“It’s going to be immensely satisfying to help position East Timor Hearts Fund to assist more patients and support the development of local services for Timorese who are currently without access to heart surgery and preventative treatments.”

Mr Thomson said his motivations in seeking the role were personal as well as professional. “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,” Mr Thomson said.

“This shook our family and shakes me today that an easily treatable condition can result in so much tragedy.”

Mr Thomson said the contrast with the treatment his 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.”

Mr Thomson would commence on 13 February and fly to Timor-Leste later this month to meet health partners and support the volunteer medical team’s screening clinics in Dili and outlying districts.

Ms Svendsen paid tribute to the outstanding work of interim CEO Mike Gregory, who has occupied the role since October.

Read Mr Thomson’s bio on our website at [easttimorheartsfund.org.au](http://easttimorheartsfund.org.au)

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