

Western Bulldogs champion Lin Jong joins our team

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Australia's only Timorese-Australian AFL player, the Western Bulldogs' Lin Jong, has joined East Timor Hearts Fund as its first ambassador, chief executive officer Stuart Thomson today announced.

"We could not be more thrilled to have a champion like Lin come on board with our team," Mr Thomson said.

"With his Timorese family background, Lin's compassion for our patients and enthusiasm for our cause is genuine and very heartening for all of us at East Timor Hearts Fund.

"His determination, courage, resilience and can-do attitude as a player really embody what we are about. It's very exciting to have Lin's support in our mission to mend more broken hearts."

Lin has been a dedicated supporter of East Timor Hearts Fund, meeting patients and attending events, including the Run Melbourne fun run.

He said his decision to become an ambassador was influenced by his family history – his father Vitor was born in Timor-Leste, and fled the country to escape civil war aged only 18.

Lin said he understood how much things had improved in Timor-Leste since his father left, but also knew that many people, including young people with heart disease, were not able to get the specialist medical help they needed.

"I've met patients who have come to Australia for surgery, and seen how life-changing it's been," Lin said.

"I'll never forget having a kick with 13-year-old Paulo only weeks after his surgery and meeting 15-year-old Melinda, who had previously been too sick to go to school, when she came back to Melbourne to do a fun run.

"I'm happy and proud to use my profile as an athlete to help get the word out about the amazing work of East Timor Hearts Fund."

Mr Thomson said the organisation also looked forward to supporting Lin in achieving his goal of learning more about Timorese culture, and hoped to host him on a visit to Timor-Leste this year.