

NEWSLETTER

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BABCOCK ASSISTS WITH HUMANITARIAN DELIVERY

In our last issue, we announced the imminent delivery of much-needed medical supplies to Timor-Leste.

Babcock International generously assisted in the delivery of crucial medical goods to Dr. Joao Ximenes and his colleagues in Dili. Without their logistical support and both the facilitation and organisation of these supplies by Dr. Mark Moore and others at OSSAA, our colleagues in Timor-Leste may have been critically underprepared for the treatment of injuries sustained by locals in the floods.



MEMBERSHIP RENEWALS

The OSSAA Committee would like to inform everyone that Membership renewals for 2021/2 are on the way, and your continued support of our small organisation is greatly appreciated.

If you are not yet a member, please consider joining by emailing Donna at dfossaa@adam.com.au

We will look to streamline the membership application process online in the near future!

STATEMENT ON FLOODS IN TIMOR-LESTE & EASTERN INDONESIA

OSSAA is mourning the tragic loss of life from flash floods that impacted Eastern Indonesia and Timor-Leste on Sunday the 4th of April. COVID-19 cases had risen due to the consequential breakdown in social distancing as survivors banded together to share what shelter remained until the region's recovery.

We have been keeping in touch with our valued colleagues in both Timor-Leste and Flores, offering what assistance we can during these challenging recent months. It is of great relief that much of the region has recovered since the floods, however there are new challenges as a result of rising COVID-19 case numbers, which has been difficult to manage with what resources they have.



OSSAA 2021 LUNCHEON UPDATE

OSSAA is looking forward to an inspiring presentation by South Australian hero Dr. Richard "Harry" Harris SC OAM, at our sold out OSSAA Luncheon in June. Harry has worked in anaesthesia, diving and aeromedical retrieval medicine in Adelaide, South Australia and abroad. His passion for cave diving goes back to the 1980s and has taken him to the corners of the globe in search of new adventures.



Harry and his colleagues have explored caves to 245m in depth, and shipwrecks to over 150m, in dives lasting over 16 hours. He is an enthusiastic underwater photographer and videographer who is now also building a career in documentary films.

Harry has a professional and voluntary interest in search and rescue operations, establishing the first sump rescue training course in Australasia. By building relationships with emergency services locally, he has been preparing for an event such as the 2018 Thai cave rescue, for which he is well-known and highly acclaimed. For this rescue operation, Harry is the 2019 South Australian of the Year, and the joint 2019 Australian of the year with dive partner Craig Challen.

A WORD FROM THE PRESIDENT

We eagerly await the opportunity to return to Timor-Leste and NTT in Indonesia.

In the interim, there has been some housekeeping. Margie Maloney, in addition to being a member of numerous team visits since 2001, has been our 'quartermaster', storing and issuing medical equipment and supplies for our teams from her home.

We thank Margie for her generosity.

Due to Margie's retirement, these supplies are now being shifted to commercial facilities with easy access for team organisers.

Readers of the previous newsletter might recall that through one of our anaesthetists, OSSAA found a way of providing needed supplies to our nursing and surgical partners in Timor-Leste. The first shipment was delivered recently and our thanks go to Babcock Helicopters for their support. Both Timor-Leste and NTT have been through very difficult circumstances, with unprecedented flooding and COVID-19.

OSSAA was contacted by our supporters in the Northern Territory looking to publish a book on the work of our founding surgeon, Dr. John Hargrave. OSSAA is of course interested in this venture and exploring how we might help. John started his volunteering (and subsequently OSSAA's) in Indonesia while working in the Northern Territory in the 1980s and 90s.

Last but not least, I am looking forward to our annual luncheon on 6th of June, anticipating a full house and Dr. Richard 'Harry' Harris as our guest speaker.

- Patrick Markwick-Smith



Spotlight on: DR. JOAO XIMENES

One of our ultimate objectives at OSSAA is to make ourselves redundant through the provision of medical training in the regions we visit. In the end, we would like to see medical capacity and skilled local specialists in Timor-Leste and remote Eastern Indonesia to be able to treat clefts, tumours, burns and other ailments without our assistance. This is why, whenever we visit these regions, we collaborate with local doctors and nurses.

Of particular note is Timorese specialist Dr. Joao Ximenes (pictured right). Dr. Ximenes has worked alongside OSSAA teams over many years, cultivating his surgical ability. Since COVID-19 complicated our plans to return to Timor-Leste as often as we did, Dr. Ximenes has been a shining beacon of medical expertise in his young country, as the only surgeon operating on cleft lip/palate and burns patients without our direct assistance. More complex cases have seen us continue to provide feedback from a virtual distance.

A young man at time of Indonesian invasion, Ximenes and his mother fled to the mountains to live for many years, moving from place to place to outmanoeuvre the Indonesian military and survive. Eventually, at the end of occupation, he returned from the mountains and sought education in both his home country and, of all places, Indonesia for his initial medical training.

Dr. Ximenes has been exceedingly capable working with our teams, with his finesse and attention to detail noticed early on, helping us to realise he would be an excellent surgeon. This is already true, as he is the only surgeon in Timor-Leste who can operate on clefts and burns, the latter of which is a particularly heavy workload!

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