



ROYAL AUSTRALASIAN COLLEGE OF SURGEONS

# MEDIA RELEASE

## Australian eye surgeon honoured by Timor Leste

**Thursday 20 May, 2010**

An Australian eye surgeon who pioneered the East Timor Eye Program (ETEP) will today receive the Order of Timor-Leste, an honour that recognises exceptional contributions to “Timor-Leste, the Timorese or Mankind”.

Dr Nitin Verma, a Tasmanian based ophthalmologist and a key contributor to several international development programs run by the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons, will receive this honour in the Timor-Leste capital Dili. It will be awarded by the President of Timor-Leste, His Excellency Dr Ramos Horta.

Trained in India and West Germany, Dr Verma has also worked in Papua New Guinea, South Australia and the Northern Territory. He has also been actively involved in the College’s Pacific Islands Project.

ETEP, which this year celebrates its tenth anniversary, is a service using volunteer teams from the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons, International Centre for Eye Care Education and, since 2003, the ProVision Optometry Team to provide services to, and help prevent curable blindness in, the East Timorese population.

Nearly 34,000 patients have been seen by the teams and more than 3,500 operations have been performed.

The program also supports the training of local staff and the development of local eye clinics, with the necessary infrastructure and equipment.

ETEP’s ultimate goal is for Timor-Leste to achieve self-sufficiency in the provision of eye care by 2015 and for preventable blindness to be effectively eradicated by 2025.

To this end, the Timor-Leste government is taking on more responsibility for the provision of general ophthalmology services, and ETEP is gradually shifting its attention to sub-specialty services.

ETEP is an AusAID supported program.

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