

# MEDIA RELEASE

## Menzies renews MoU with Timor-Leste Ministry of Health

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An important partnership in the work to improve public health in Timor-Leste has been strengthened with Menzies School of Health Research (Menzies) and the Timor-Leste Ministry of Health (MoH) signing a new Memorandum of Understanding (MoU).

The new MoU means Menzies and the Ministry of Health will continue to work together over the next three years to gather scientific evidence, giving decision-makers access to the latest information and data, to help inform the development of new policy.

The Minister of Health Dr Odete Maria Freitas Belo said Menzies is an internationally recognised health research institute which has developed close ties over the years with many health professionals and the Timor-Leste Ministry of Health.

"In this regard, I wish to continue on the path of strengthening the excellent partnership and cooperation arrangements between our two institutions by renewing an ongoing Memorandum of Understanding, with the expectation of seeking Menzies expertise in order to help us gather much needed scientific evidence to guide policy and decision-making to controlling communicable diseases in Timor-Leste, while also strengthening our human resource capacity in providing medical care as well as preventing infectious disease," Minister Belo said.

Timor-Leste Project Lead, Associate Professor Joshua Francis is grateful for the opportunity to work alongside the Ministry of Health, and spoke of the clear commitment to tackling infectious diseases and improving health in Timor-Leste.

"Through the COVID-19 pandemic, Timor-Leste has demonstrated the impact of effective partnerships between laboratory, public health and clinicians in combatting health challenges. Using research as a tool, and focusing on building local capacity and leadership, it is possible to apply the same principles to combatting other infectious diseases like TB, HIV, dengue and childhood pneumonia" A/Prof Francis said.

Director of Menzies Professor Alan Cass AO said establishing an office in Timor-Leste in 2019, has been mutually beneficial.

"Our presence in Timor-Leste has helped to plan, engage and conduct our research while also being better equipped to support and build the capacity of local staff. By working together, we are able to better understand the needs of Timor-Leste and develop programs of work and research which address high priority needs of the community and health service partners. It demonstrates our commitment, and means we can fully realise our deep partnership with Timor-Leste," Prof Cass said.

Menzies projects in Timor-Leste are designed to build capacity in clinical, surveillance and laboratory settings, emphasising the importance of the health system working together to improve response to infectious diseases at both the individual patient and the public health level.

For More information on Menzies collaborations in Timor-Leste please visit <https://www.menzies.edu.au/Timor-Leste>

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**Menzies School of Health Research**

Menzies is one of Australia's leading medical research institutes dedicated to improving the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, and a leader in global and tropical research into life-threatening illnesses, Menzies continues to translate research into effective partnerships and programs in communities across Australia and the Asia-Pacific region.

