



Craig sets sights on Timor

In times of **Need**

STORY and PHOTO:
Karisa Whelan

ULLADULLA optometrist Craig Cameron will fly to Timor this Saturday to spend a week volunteering in a remote community.

As part of a team organised through the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons and supported by Optometry Giving Sight, Craig will spend five days in Oecussi completing eye exams and providing glasses to those in need.

Having been a supporter of Optometry Giving Sight for many years, Craig was made aware of the aid missions and knew he wanted to be a part of the project.

When a spot opened up on the upcoming mission, Craig was lucky enough to be contacted to join the team.

"One of the optometrists

was forced to pull out so they had a free spot available," he said.

"I had contacted Optometry Giving Sight many times to put my name down to do a volunteer project and was over the moon when I got word that a spot was open."

Oecussi is an enclave between East and West Timor and is difficult to access due to its proximity to the Indonesian controlled West Timor territories.

To get to the area, Craig and the team will fly in on a United Nations helicopter.

"The area is fairly remote," Craig said.

"I have heard it is very pretty, so I hope to get some time to look around a little."

The team is comprised of optometrists, ophthalmolo-

gists, surgeons, nurses and St John's volunteers and will work from the hospital in Oecussi.

While there, they will also help to train the resident eye-care nurse at the hospital.

With most of the population speaking little to no English, Craig understands the week will be a challenge, but is excited to be able to give back.

"It is great to know I will be able to use my skills to help people who would not have the chance to get help otherwise," Craig said.

"It will be completely different to what I do locally to support the community.

"We are expecting to see up to 100 people per day."

The missions are run annually and Craig hoped his input

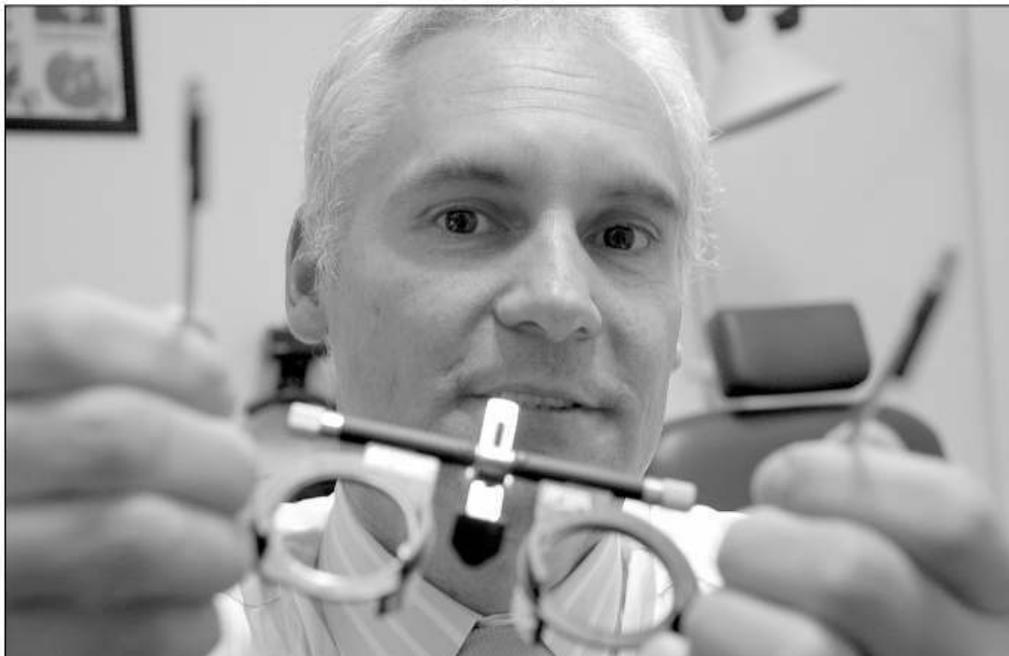
on the upcoming trip could lead to a spot on future missions.

During the 2008 trip, the team assessed 350 people, provided 248 pairs of glasses and conducted 64 surgical procedures.

Many of those seen had treatable conditions and the main problem faced in Oecussi is the unavailability of simple spectacles for reading and other tasks.

It was reported that very few of the people treated on previous missions had ever had an eye examination.

• More information about the leading supporter of the trip, Optometry Giving Sight is available at www.givingsight.org



READY TO HELP: Ulladulla optometrist Craig Cameron will spend a week volunteering in East Timor as part of a team supported by the Optometry Giving Sight foundation.