

# MEDIA RELEASE

## AUSTRALIAN EMBASSY VIENTIANE



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### **Australia launches new Interplast film - Rebuilding Bodies and Lives**



*Ambassador John Williams (centre left) with Minister of Public Health, H.E. Professor Dr Eksavang Vongvichit (centre right) launched the new Interplast film. Photo credit: Bart Verweij*

Australian Ambassador John Williams and Minister of Public Health, H.E. Professor Dr Eksavang Vongvichit, today officially launched a documentary film to promote an Australian initiative to deliver reconstructive surgery to needy Lao people.

The film highlights two decades of work in the Lao PDR by Australian NGO Interplast to provide plastic and reconstructive surgery to burns victims from remote and disadvantaged communities.

The Interplast surgical teams also work to improve the skills of Lao medical staff.

Funded under the Australian Embassy's Direct Aid Program (DAP), the film was produced in Vientiane and Xiengkhouang by talented young Lao film maker and Australian alumni, Vannaphone Sithirath (Kino).

Ambassador Williams said he hoped the film would make more Lao people aware of the opportunity to access a surgical service that was continuing to rebuild bodies and lives across the country.

“Having seen first hand the work of Interplast’s medical teams, I admire their commitment. And I feel real pride at the impact Interplast have had over two decades in rebuilding shattered bodies, and in doing so transforming the lives of people from disadvantage and people with a disability,” said Williams. “Interplast deliver hope, and offer a fresh start for people in most need.”

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Interplast sends Australian volunteer plastic and reconstructive surgeons, anaesthetists and nurses to Laos twice a year to provide surgery and training around burns management and treatment.

Williams said the Australian medical teams were building an impressive legacy in the Lao PDR through their skills training for local medical staff in reconstructive and plastic surgery.

The documentary will be broadcasted on Lao National Television in coming weeks to raise awareness among Lao people living in remote areas who would like to benefit from this medical support.

Interplast Australia New Zealand is a not-for-profit organisation. It has been working closely with the Lao Ministry of Public Health since 1995 to improve the quality of life of people living with a disability as a result of medical conditions such as cleft lip/palate and burns.

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