

Trisha's hearing aid to Indonesia

By KERRY FAULKNER

Trisha Henderson, of Cottesloe, is helping fight the soaring incidence of hearing loss in Indonesian children with a special training course in Perth this month.

Her charity, the Patricia O'Sullivan Humanitarian Project (POHP), is hosting 11 of East Java's brightest nurses and teachers for the three-week intensive training program.

It is their first time out of Indonesia and they will take back with them the skills to better screen children for hearing problems in a country where hearing loss is prolific.

It is estimated that up to 3790 children are born every year with permanent hearing loss in the East Java region.

And there are between 27,000 and 58,850 children aged under 15 with significant hearing loss requiring hearing aids. Only 10% will ever have one because of the cost.

The disability robs them not only of their ability to hear but also to speak and learn.

Despite rubella in pregnancy being pinpointed as a major cause, there is no free vaccination against the disease, which can cause deafness, blindness and heart problems in children.

Ms Henderson is determined to change the alarming statistics through POHP, which was founded and named in honour of her mother, whose work in the country started 22 years ago.

She was still working there into her 80s until a stroke five years ago.

She first visited the country with her husband Dan,

former editor-in-chief of West Australian Newspapers and a member of the International Press Council.

He was on the advising committee which recommended to the state government that WA form a sister-city relationship with the East Java provincial government.

The agreement was signed in 1990.

Mrs O'Sullivan, a pre-primary teacher and early childhood expert, was immediately drawn to the Karya Mulia School for deaf children when the couple first visited.

"My mother got very involved with the school and over the years would send up audiologists, trainers in soft ear moulds, and reconditioned computers.

"She established a toy library because they didn't have much by way of material things," Ms Henderson said.

"They were both really active, socially aware people and it's a privilege to keep the work going."

The charity work today is done by seven volunteers, led by Trisha as president, who have made enormous inroads into community health.

The teachers and nurses now training in Perth had two months' training before arriving.

Intensive lessons here will introduce them to the expertise of the WA Institute for Deaf Education, Telethon Speech and Hearing Centre for Children and the Ear Science Institute Australia.

As the training program started, the vice-regents of Gresik and Sidoarjo committed to establishing hearing centres in their regions, bringing to



Trisha Henderson with Indonesian teachers and nurses training to be able to better treat deafness in children in East Java where hearing loss is widespread.

three the number of community resource centres in Surabaya committed to hearing.

In addition, they will develop specialised audiology clinics at Airlangga University Hospital and Karya Mulia Deaf School.

Ms Henderson said she was pleased the vice-regents had

committed to an immunisation program against rubella.

"That, for a start, is going to save lives, so that is a huge thing," she said.

"That's directly from this program and we hope that will spread through East Java.

"It is a health program that started with hearing."

Neds rehires staffer with o

The Nedlands council worker who quit after setting up a business to help people get planning and building permits has been hired again.

Nedlands council staff said Matthew Deal was contracted to process building approvals.

He is at the city's offices one day a week.

"Matt Deal is contracted to complete the project management of John Leckie Pavilion,"

a spokesman said.

"This project is nearing completion.

"We are also contracting Matt for some building approvals on an ad hoc basis.

"These arrangements are in place while we seek to fill his role."

Property manager Mr Deal quit the council in March after being told by acting chief executive Mike Cole to wind up his business.