

Wednesday 6 March 2019

## Helen Szoke announces retirement

One of Australia's most powerful advocates for foreign aid, international development, human rights and equality, Dr Helen Szoke, is retiring, Oxfam Australia's Board Chair Dennis Goldner announced today.

Dr Szoke started as Chief Executive in January 2013, after serving as Australia's Federal Race Discrimination Commissioner and Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commissioner.

Her outstanding service to social justice was recognised by the award of the Officer of Order of Australia (AO) last year. Dr Szoke is retiring to spend more time with family.

Mr Goldner said Dr Szoke's intelligence and exceptional interpersonal skills had been instrumental in creating an environment of trust, transparency and humanity in the boardroom and beyond.

"She has made an outstanding contribution to the continued impact of Oxfam Australia's work and future direction – she is a leader who knows how and when to listen, to collaborate or to challenge," Mr Goldner said.

"The Board extends its deep gratitude to Helen for the successful journey she has led Oxfam on, and wishes her well in the next chapter of her life."

Since Dr Szoke started at Oxfam Australia, the organisation has directly impacted the lives of more than ten million people – from empowering women from Pakistan to Papua New Guinea, as well as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, to claim their seat at the decision-making table, to ensuring families in Timor-Leste can grow enough food to eat and sell – as well as many millions more in humanitarian response.

"I've often remarked that I have the best job in the world, so making this decision wasn't easy," Dr Szoke said.

"But it's time for me to step back from full-time work. I want to be able to support my family as well as continue to contribute to the community in a number of different ways.

"Whilst it's a challenging time for the sector, working against the backdrop of an ever-shrinking aid budget and rising inequality here and overseas, I remain as convinced as ever that Australians will continue to have a positive impact when we join forces to tackle poverty and inequality head-on.

"What I will always remember is the resilience and generosity of the people with whom we work around the world. I've always said visiting an Oxfam program is like visiting a country through the eyes of a family – to understand their perspective and see first hand the life-changing impact of Oxfam's work has been a privilege."

Dr Szoke will continue her work as a Board member of The Cranlana Foundation and a member of the Council of the University of Melbourne.

She will retire from the role by August. Oxfam Australia's Board has already begun the recruitment process for her replacement.

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