

MEDIA RELEASE

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Reef and Rainforest Research Centre - Cairns, Australia

For immediate release



Australian-trained rangers rebuild hospital on PNG border

A team of local rangers trained under an Australian-funded aid development program have repaired a badly degraded hospital in a disease-struck region of Papua New Guinea's border with Australia.

The rangers rebuilt the run-down hospital in the village of Mabaduan, which is one of 13 Treaty Villages in Papua New Guinea's South Fly province.

The refurbishment took place over a period of several months starting in December 2015 and included extensive repairs to the building's roof, floors, windows, floors, decking and stairs, in addition to a new coat of paint, removal of pest infestations and cleaning up of vegetation around the hospital.

The works are expected to add 2-3 years to the life of the hospital, which is intended to serve as a women's centre after that time.

Three new doctors will be posted to the hospital from the provincial capital of Daru.

Rebuilding the hospital is just one of the many vital community development projects carried out by the rangers, which have been trained under the Treaty Village Resilience Program, which is managed by the Cairns-based Reef and Rainforest Research Centre and funded by Australian Aid.

Rangers trained under the Treaty Village Resilience Program are trained in a wide range of vital community development skills including construction, first aid, leadership, sanitation, plumbing, seamanship and information technology.

52 rangers, including 12 women, have been trained under the first phase of the program. They have already constructed more than 1 million litres of new water storage and 8 new wells in addition to a wide variety of other essential infrastructure.

The rangers have also performed hundreds of acts of life-saving first aid and transportation.

Under the 1978 Torres Strait Treaty, residents of the Treaty Villages are allowed free travel for traditional purposes between their villages and the northern islands of the Torres Strait, the nearest of which is Saibai Island less than four kilometres off the coast.

South Fly and other regions of Papua New Guinea are currently experiencing the combined effects of a tuberculosis outbreak and severe drought, in addition to a near-total lack of primary health care and other vital services, with many residents forced to seek help across the border in Australian territory.

RRRC managing director Sheriden Morris said the hospital repairs were an important step for the Treaty Villages toward resilience and self-reliance.

“Having a functional hospital is obviously critical to maintaining health and resilience in any community, but it’s especially vital for a community like Mabuadan which doesn’t have road access to a major population centre, so when people get sick they often have no choice but to cross over to Saibai Island or other places in the Torres Strait,” she said.

“It’s a step toward improving conditions on Australia’s borderlands.”

More information on the Treaty Village Resilience Program is available online at <http://rrrc.org.au/programs/png/>.





i The hospital was in poor condition before refurbishment, with rusted roofing iron, decaying floorboards and mouldy walls



ii Materials were brought by barge from Daru and Port Moresby





iiiRangers applied their training to repair the hospital



iv The hospital after refurbishment

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