

Solomon Islands

The Solomon Islands project is in association with the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons, and has consisted of the organization of visits as part of an AusAID funded project. A visit in 2003, to Honiara, has enabled interesting insights to the Paediatric Surgical training program for the combined RACS Pacific Island and Tertiary Health Services Program. In particular it has highlighted the advantages of training being focused across the Pacific Nations and PNG in a uniform way. While the initial intent was for Dr Mclee Mathew (the first of the Papua New Guinean trained Paediatric Surgeons) to be the visiting Paediatric Surgeon, the failure to obtain the appropriate paperwork enabled him to expand his role in PNG, while the Solomon Islands program was reviewed by the Paediatric Program coordinator.

Unfortunately, Paediatric Surgical development problems that have been common in the past in PNG also occur in the Solomon Islands. These include the late presentation of cases, the inappropriate siting of colostomies (the bowel being opened to the skin when faecal flow through the colon cannot occur), the limited use of pro-active management of a number of conditions, including colostomy prolapse and a range of surgeons in complex Paediatric Surgery, who have not been involved in the training program. These issues are less of a problem in the Solomon Islands because of the previous exposure of surgical staff to training in PNG. Undoubtedly, the active participation of junior staff and students in the clinics and operative sessions will go a long way to help the difficulties in the care of children with surgical disease in the future.

Two further visits to Honiara have occurred which are linked to visits to PNG and by PNG surgeons. It would be hoped that back-up for the more complex cases will subsequently be from PNG, New Zealand and Australia, but mainly from PNG.

The Paediatric Surgical training program to the Solomon Islands is an extension of the program in PNG, which has been underway since 1993, and has involved three Australian Paediatric Surgeons, supported by the AUSaid funded IDP/MONAHIP or PIP management groups. The outcome for the Solomon Islands has been significantly improved by these efforts and those of Dr Kiki Moate from New Zealand. The visit to the Solomon Islands was assisted through the generosity of Tyco International, and recycled items collected by nursing and other staff in the theatres of several Victorian Hospitals, including The Royal Children's Hospital, Western Hospital Sunshine, Mercy Private Hospital, The Geelong Hospital and St John of God Hospital, Geelong. Qantas and Air Niugini have kindly transported these items free of charge.