

Tin Can Island Rotary Dental Project



Remote Niuafu'ou is the northernmost island of Tonga. The generally wooded land area of 49 square km includes a volcanic peak 285 metres high, several lakes—including a large crater lake containing several islands, one of which contains a crater lake of its own—and numerous hot springs. During a particularly violent eruption in 1946, the island's inhabitants, numbering some 1,200, were evacuated to 'Eua Island, several hundred miles to the south. They began returning to Niuafu'ou in 1958. Because of an unusual method of receiving its mail in cans dropped from passing ships and

picked up by swimmers or in canoes, because the terrain precluded a landing wharf, Niuafu'ou gained the nickname "Tin Can Island".

Niuafu'ou has just recently been allocated an experienced dental therapist as a permanent position. There has been no access to any dental treatment since well before the covid-19 epidemic. Access to the outside world is only sporadic. Currently, there is no workable dental equipment on the island and the Rotary Club of Ballarat West, with support from ICD Section VIII, is providing dental equipment to set up a permanent dental clinic on the island. Wages for the dental therapist and dental materials needed to sustain this dental service will be provided by the Tonga Ministry of Health.

The dental equipment was shipped in a 40-foot DiK shipping container to Tonga on October 27th. This consignment of donations will be part of a much larger Rotary project to equip a two-chair dental clinic and 14-bed health centre at Tonga College in December 2023.

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