

Rotary Tonga Dental, Medical and Schools Project 2022

Editor's Note: Fellow David Goldsmith has just returned from two weeks in Tonga and sends this report on his most recent visit. I think readers will agree that the work led by David as described in his report is extraordinary. ICD is proud to be a supporter.

This Rotary project is registered as Rotary Club of Ballarat West RAWCS Project 144/2005-05. This project is proudly supported by Section VIII of ICD.

Project Aims and Objectives

- Purchasing and shipping a 40ft container of requested donations of dental and medical equipment
- Equipment to install new dental clinics in three secondary schools.
 - **Queen Salote College** (all girls, 1000+, some boarders),
 - **Apifo'ou College**, (Catholic, 1300 students)
 - **Tupou College** (1000+ boys, all boarders)
- Equipping first aid rooms in these schools, including a 16-bed health clinic at Toloa
- New school libraries for the Queen Salote College (Junior and Senior)
- Donations of medical equipment and supplies for the Vaiola National Hospital
- Converting the container into a permanent maintenance and repair facility at the Vaiola Hospital
- Providing emergency Aid supplies for the Tonga Volcano and Tsunami disaster recovery



2022 Tonga Rotary Volunteer team at Queen Salote College televised opening with some of our Tonga partners; special guest Queen Nanasipau'u of Tonga (seated on left)

RC Ballarat West dental projects in Tonga have continued since 1996 and have established many friendships and close contacts. Without this established medical, dental and engineering support, it would have been extremely difficult to successfully implement such a varied project in just two weeks and during an active Covid epidemic. Our 2020 team consisted of a talented group of 14 volunteers with a variety of skills from several Rotary Clubs.

Deepest Gratitude

We are grateful and deeply honoured for the committed support we received during this visit, including support from Her Majesty Queen Nanasipau'u of Tonga; the Prime Minister, Hon. Siaosi 'Ofakivahafolau Sovaleni; the Australian High Commissioner Ms. Rachel Moore; the CEO of the Ministry of Health Dr Siale Akau'ola; the Minister of Health Hon. Dr. Saia Piukala; Lord Tangi; the Rotary Club of Nuku'alofa; Dental Department CEO Dr 'Amanaki Fakakovikaetau FICD, DR. Sisilia Fusi Fifita FICD, Dr. Susitina Piukalu and other dental staff at Vaiola Hospital; students of the three schools, and countless others. Past student bodies have pledged ongoing support of supplies, staffing and finances together with the Tonga MOH to ensure the long-term viability of these clinics.

Rotary clubs and Districts such as Keilor, Ballarat East, Balwyn, Cranbourne and Koo-We-Rup, the International College of Dentists (ICD), the Rotary Foundation, RAWCS, and others supported the project financially. RC Ballarat East members loaded three DIK truckloads of donations from Ballarat, driven from Melbourne by David Dippie such as 25 TVs, books, and 276 banks of library shelving.

Two 40-foot high-cube shipping containers filled with donations working from the Wish Lists supplied from Tonga were shipped from the DIK West Footscray Store in Melbourne in April and May to the Vaiola Hospital, Nuku'alofa. These containers included all the equipment and supplies needed for the above projects.

Central to this project's success has been utilizing the management, accountability, and resources of Rotary Australia World Community Service (RAWCS) and Rotary Donations-In-Kind (DIK), plus the added value of Rotary Clubs networking together. Such a large undertaking as this, involving three Rotary Districts, several individual projects, and multiple Rotary Clubs, simply would not happen within Rotary without this RAWCS support.

Also, crucial locally was the organisation, commitment and ongoing work by Mr. Sioli Manu, the chief dental engineer for Tonga. There was regular, sometimes daily, communication between the project managers Dr. David Goldsmith in Australia and Mr. Sioli Manu in Tonga over many months.

Key supporters for the Junior and Senior Libraries for the Queen Salote College were the Rotary Club of Ballarat East, RCBW supporter Selina Knight at Ballarat and Clarendon College and the Ballarat City Library. Their donations of 276 bookshelves, three pallets of quality books, plus chairs, stools, tables, and filing cabinets enabled us to furnish both the Senior and Junior Libraries with books, shelves, photocopier and computers.

Ballarat East Rotary donated 25 flat-screen TVs, which have been allocated to hospital waiting rooms in Tonga.

Thanks to team member Marie Knight, 250 "Days For Girls" hand-made reusable female hygiene kits were distributed from the container to Queen Salote College. It is hoped this will initiate a new DFG chapter in Tonga by the school. These were supplied by various groups from Wimmera and Melbourne.

Libraries at Queen Salote College



Upstairs Junior Library



Ground floor Senior Library



Her Majesty Queen Nanaispau'u of Tonga unveils the new Senior Library at Queen Salote College

Dental Clinics

Dental equipment sent in two DIK containers has equipped three new school clinics. Spare parts in the new Rotary Dental Workshop will be used to maintain the dental equipment throughout the Kingdom.

This project will allow Tonga to extend its junior and kinder preventive dental programs (Mali-Mali) into three main secondary schools, including one with over 1000 full-time boarders. This gives these schools the considerable advantage of students having their clinical and preventive dental treatment performed on-site in familiar surroundings, without them having to leave the campus to visit the hospital and losing a day's education.

The Dental department has agreed to staff the clinics. Alumni Dentists from these same schools together with the MOH and past student bodies will sustain them with supplies. The Royal Melbourne Dental Hospital has donated 6 dental chairs of models(A-dec) ideally suited to Tongan conditions and come with spare parts available. Three more Adec chairs were also donated by dentists. Five robust older style autoclaves have been donated and factory validated to Australian standards by Siltex Australia in Melbourne, and they also came with spare parts. Autoclaves are vital pieces of medical equipment. These sturdy models withstand the large voltage fluctuations experienced in the smaller Outer Islands much better than many newer models. Also, Tongan Biomedical engineers and dental staff have experience in working, maintaining, and repairing them.

The aim of this RC Ballarat West project is to make Tonga self-sufficient in dental equipment and maintenance. We decommissioned three dental practices in Melbourne and their entire contents were donated to the project. Other dental donations include \$30,000 sets of new denture teeth and \$25,000 of orthodontic supplies (bands, braces, NiTi arch wires etc.), sets of surgical and conservative (fillings) dental instruments for all the new clinics, and the purchase of new items from our funding resources such as a hand-held X-ray machine (a Tonga first), new water distillers, an Intra-Oral camera, (a Tonga first) an Apex locator and endodontic handpiece, and X-ray developers.

RC Ballarat West progressively accumulated donations over the past 12 months from an extensive Tonga Wishlist, which were shipped in two 40-foot-high cube containers in May and June. The containers were packed and sorted so that the items inside to be unloaded progressively as needed and the contents were unloaded and at their respective venues when the Rotary team arrived in Tonga. Many of these donations

included medical supplies from Melbourne Donations-in-Kind and books and shelving from RC of Ballarat East. The total value of the donations provided would run into many hundreds of thousands of dollars.



Dental chairs from DHSV / Engineer Cale Ziola checks suitability of the dental equipment and 25 TVs for waiting rooms

Dental Repair and Storage Workshop at Vaiola Hospital

One of our shipping containers has been converted into a much-needed Dental Equipment repair and storage workshop. In Tonga the hospital staff had painted the outside and put on a roof to protect it from the climate and had already installed the shelving, workbench, and two air conditioners when we arrived. Almost all of the spare parts and tools in the workshop have been sent progressively over the years from the Rotary Club of Ballarat West. **Mr. Sioeli Manu** has provided a detailed workshop inventory. This is a very well-organised storage & repair workshop and a great asset for the Hospital



Preparing the container in Melbourne



Roofing over the container workshop at Vaiola Hospital



Inside the Hospital Dental Workshop.



The Spare parts and dental equipment all came from RC Ballarat West

Financials

Major donors were the Rotary Clubs of Keilor and Ballarat West.

We also received financial support from Rotary Donations-in-Kind, the Rotary Clubs of Cranbourne, RC Koo-Wee-Rup, Balwyn, D9820, the Rotary Foundation, the International College of Dentists (ICD), RAWCS, Melbourne Fofu'anga Club and some private donors. The Rotary Australia Disaster Fund donated \$18,000 to the project towards container purchases and shipping costs.

Total financial donations from a variety of supporters came to over \$50,000

These funds were administered and audited through the Rotary Club of Ballarat West RAWCS Project 144/2005-06 and all accounts and receipts are available on request

Education and Training

Specialist Orthodontist Dr Deborah Sykes and **Dr Susitina Piukalu** developed a special relationship, originally forged in Ballarat, Australia in 2016, and which has developed to provide an Orthodontic service in Tonga. This partnership includes the provision of specialist supplies and clinical diagnosis. Dr. Piukalu is the only dentist in Tonga providing fixed appliance orthodontic treatment. This visit by Dr. Deborah Sykes has further strengthened their relationship, and the service Dr. Piukalu is providing for Tongan healthy smiles.

Dental Equipment Engineer, **Mr Peter Copp**, also joined by his partner **Mary Copp** have been installing dental equipment in Tonga and other Pacific Islands (Solomon Is. Vanuatu, Cook Islands) since 1996. Central to Peter's work has been the training of local dental staff and tradesmen to do the installations, repairs and maintenance themselves. This has resulted in Tonga now being largely self-sufficient in dental equipment maintenance under the leadership of **Mr. Sioli Manu**.

Tonga now has its own custom-designed and fully stocked repair and storage workshop at Vaiola Hospital. Mr. Manu (Uho), and Mr. Peter Copp are seen below training dental apprentice engineers Messi and Fred. These two men did much of the installation work at all three schools this year themselves, whilst under the close watchful eyes and supervision of Peter and Mr. Sioli Manu. A great practical hands-on learning experience!

RAWCS Team member, and past student of Tupou College, Mr. **Lopeti Lanivia** has generously awarded a scholarship for a chosen student to be educated at a school on Queensland's Gold Coast for years 10, 11 and 12 with the expectation of a further degree education course to be provided at Griffith University.



Dental Equipment Training – Peter Copp and Sioli Manu with Tongan engineer apprentices Messi and Fred



Queen Salote Dental Clinic – seen here with volunteer dental Nurse Ms. Claire Tannahill



Queen Salote Sick Bay



Queen Salote Sick Bay



Apifo'ou Dental Clinic - the first patient in the dental chair was Rotarian David Dippie!



Dancing at the Apifo'ou College opening



Apifo'ou College Sick Bay.



John MacDonald with Apifo'ou School Nurse Gladys

Tupou College Fire



Tragedy struck just a few days before our arrival with a major fire in the building in which we were to install our Dental and Medical equipment. Fortunately, the 10 students sleeping in the building, which was being used as a dormitory, heroically pulled out our dental chairs, equipment, cabinetry and medical supplies from the building to safety before the Fire Brigade arrived. Without this prompt action, we could have lost everything.

Then the Tupou College past students in the form of Puloka Constructions came to the rescue to totally refurbish the building in record time. In just 10 days the **Hon. Tēvita Fatafehi Puloka**, (a Longatecki alumni) and his Tonga construction company put his staff to work and we had a new roof, ceiling, tiling, rewiring, painting and plumbing completed and authorised for use in time for us to install the Dental Clinic and Hospital. Quite an amazing feat. This then allowed us to have the dental clinic and hospital installed and working in time for the opening ceremony.

It is a tribute to the Longoteki Brotherhood, past students of Tupou College, and its leader in this project Dr. **'Amanaki Fakakovikaetau F.I.C.D.**, that the building was finished in time to enable the dental chairs, compressors, suction motors, sterilizing room, instruments etc. be installed and working in the Dental Clinic, plus the 16 hospital beds, furnishings, medical supplies, and equipment to be ready for the Hospital opening ceremony

Both the Dental Clinic and Hospital looked fabulous!



The new dental clinic provided by the Rotary Club of Ballarat West at Tupou College, Toloa



Australian High Commissioner, Ms. Rachel Moore, and Prince Kalaniuvalu Fotofili inspect the new hospital



Presentation at the Moulton Chapel / Ribbon cutting was by His Serene Highness Prince Kalaniuvalu Fotofili.

The formal opening ceremony was held in the impressive Moulton Chapel, the largest traditional Tongan Fale in the world. After the Dental Clinic and Hospital ribbon-cutting ceremony, performed by the guest of honour and past student His Serene Highness **Prince Kalaniuvalu Fotofili**, there was an inspection of the new facilities. This was followed by speeches and votes of thanks. Entertainment was provided by singers and an outdoor jazz session by some of Tonga's finest musicians for the Rotary team, assembled distinguished guests, politicians, clergy, teaching staff, and students past and present.

Thank you to these RAWCS volunteers who made this Rotary project possible:

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| David Goldsmith | Team leader/Dentist, Rotary Club of Ballarat West PHF |
| John MacDonald | IT Nurse, (with 25 years of Tonga experience), PHF |
| David Dippie | Rotary Donations-in-Kind, PHF, Rotary Club of Keilor East |
| Peter Copp | Specialist Dental Equipment Engineer, PHF |
| Mary Copp | Dental equipment installations |
| Phil Roberts | Head Teacher / Education, Rotary Club of Ballarat West PHF |
| Jack Knight | Head Teacher / Tradesman / Farmer, Rotary Club of Horsham |
| Marie Knight | Education, Horsham, Days for Girls |
| Damien Knight | Optometrist |
| Claire Tannahill | Dental Nurse |
| Deborah Sykes | Specialist Orthodontist |
| Lopeti Lanivia | Past Student of Longoteki 'ae 'Uma Brotherhood of Tupou College |
| Ross Stewart | Dentist, Carindale Rotary Club, Queensland |
| Kim Schilling | Travelling Dentist, Los Vegas Sunrise Rotary Club, USA |

It is important to recognise the invaluable support we received from Dr 'Amanaki Fakakovikaetau, Dr Sisilia Fusi Fifita, and Mr. Sioeli Manu of the dental department, the Rotary Clubs of Ballarat West, Australia and Nuku'alofa, Tonga, and the unwavering leadership and support we received throughout the visit from the Ministry of Health, especially its CEO Dr. Siale Akau'ola and the Minister of Health Dr Saia Piukala.

Full TV video coverage of the opening ceremonies for the new facilities provided by Rotary at both Queen Salote College and Tupou College are available for viewing on Facebook and YouTube.

Queen Salote College: <https://www.facebook.com/broadcasting.broadcomfm/videos/494565735342284/>

Tupou College: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7f9LfKqQZrQ>

