

SOPAC NewsUpdate #015, 8 January 2003

1. Secretariat Office reopens after Christmas break

The SOPAC Secretariat was closed in the Christmas/New Year period from the end of the business day, Friday, 20 December and reopened Monday, 6 January 2003. With this NewsUpdate being the first in the new year, we at the SOPAC News Desk take the opportunity to wish you only what is good for you in the year 2003.§

2. Salute to Tikopia and Anuta, Solomon Islands

The heartening news that there was no loss of lives during the very recent devastation of these islands by Tropical Cyclone Zoe is a testimony to the resilience and fortitude of the people. We salute the people of Tikopia and Anuta. More on this in a future issue of SOPAC News when information is less sketchy.§

3. SOPAC Programmes and Strategies

With the start of 2003, SOPAC enters a new era with the implementation of the new SOPAC Programmes and Strategies. There are now three work programmes; Ocean and Islands, Community Lifelines and Community Risk; each with a long-term strategic plan. A fourth Corporate Support Services Programme provides for the day-to-day operational function of the Secretariat.§

4. Australia and SOPAC Sign new MOU

On Friday 20th December, Acting High Commissioner for Australia, Richard Ryan, and SOPAC Deputy Director, Russell Howorth, signed a new three-year Memorandum of Understanding to take effect from 1 January 2003. This MOU sets out the basic funding support commitment and arrangements regarding Australia's support of the Secretariat's work. The dollar value is AUD\$5.4 million spread equally over three years.§

5. SOPAC Equipment aid in Police Investigation of Fiji Murder case

The suspected murder of a seven-year-old Indo-Fijian student grabbed the attention of the nation of Fiji in the weekend of 23/24 November. Her body was retrieved from the waters off the Suva wharf by the Fiji Navy. The bodies of her dead mother and stepfather were also recovered a few days later by Navy divers in a submerged car off the face of Suva wharf. SOPAC Marine Geophysicist, Robert Smith was contacted by the Fiji Police to assist in the search. A SOPAC team accompanied by police officers surveyed an area of up to 100 m off the length of the wharf using the Shallow-water Swath Mapper onboard the Fiji Mineral Resources Department vessel Yautalei. An anomalous object was identified on the seafloor and pointed out to the police officers. It was at this target that the Navy divers did the rest of their recovery work.§

6. Secretariat reorganise floor space

Floor space at the SOPAC Secretariat is presently being reorganised at the grandest scale ever, since the move to the present temporary buildings (thanks to Australia & Fiji) after the first Director, Jioji Kotobalavu, was recruited in 1986. In accordance with the new corporate structure approved at SOPAC's 31st Session, the components of the Ocean & Islands Programme are being consolidated into the new building donated by the EU, to allow for appropriate expansion to the floor space allocation to the other three new programme areas that'll accommodate the new staff positions in 7. below.§

7. EU/SOPAC Project Staff Recruitment

Recruitment process for ten new staff positions at the SOPAC Secretariat under the EU/SOPAC Vulnerability Reduction Project intensified at the close of 2002. While one support position has had to be readvertised, most positions have been filled with people starting work from next week. See SOPAC News 2002(4) for more details on who they are and what they'll be doing.§

8. Issues of SOPAC News

For the latest and all the back issues of SOPAC News, check our website www.sopac.org.§

For more information on any item in this NewsUpdate please visit <<http://www.sopac.org/nuke/>> and post your comments and stories or contact the SOPAC Director: director@sopac.org