

# **Rotary Club of North Balwyn**

## **Adopt a Village Project - Tulagi**

**Report on Trip by Bob Bott and Bill Oakley to Solomons 23 May – 3 June 2006**

Tulagi is a small island which is part of the Florida Island group which comprise the main group of islands in Central Province, one of the nine provinces of the Solomon Islands which function as a federation. Central Province has a total population of 25,000 (total SI population about 500,000) most of which is on three main islands - Tulagi with about 2000, and most of the rest on Big Gela and Small Gela Islands. Tulagi is about 40 kilometres by sea from Honiara and is separated from the other Florida Islands by a channel of about 1 to 2 kilometres.

Tulagi was the capital of the Solomon Islands before the Second World War because it has a superb harbour. In fact in the early 20th century the British considered establishing their main far east base there instead of Singapore. Because of this the land on Tulagi (about 5 kilometres by 1 kilometre) is sort of government and private owned in a freehold style of land ownership. On the other islands of Central Province, as for most of the land in the SI, land is traditionally owned, and land users can generally only obtain leases over land. Tulagi is not so much a village in the traditional SI sense as a small urban area of housing. No-one appears to identify themselves as traditional Tulagi Islanders. Most seem to have a traditional village they come from on one of the other islands. Alphonse, for example, is a Malaitan.

The closest thing to a traditional leader on Tulagi appears to be the Bishop of Tulagi in the Church of Melanesia (Anglican). He is Bishop Charles Charles Koete. We did not have the opportunity to meet him on this visit. We recommend that future groups visiting Tulagi from our club make a particular point of trying to meet with Bishop Koete.

## **Visits**

### **Rotary Club of Honiara**

|                |                          |            |             |           |
|----------------|--------------------------|------------|-------------|-----------|
| Roy Hall       | President 05/06          | Bus. 39209 | Priv 22839  |           |
| Wayne Morris   | (D.I.K.)                 | Bus. 21851 | Priv. 22630 | Fax 23342 |
| Bill MacGregor | (P.E. 05/06)             | Bus. 36563 | Priv. 36518 | Fax 36220 |
| Linda McMillan | (Tulagi 06/07)           | Bus 38346  | Priv 28778  |           |
| Phil Bradford  | (Island Enterprises Ltd) | Bus 30152  | Priv 22128  |           |

We attended the Rotary meeting on Tuesday (23/5) where we were the guest speakers. We had the opportunity to introduce ourselves and the Rotary Club of North Balwyn and our hopes for the Tulagi project. Rotary Club of Honiara is a busy club of around 30 members which is heavily involved in partnering service projects with other Rotary clubs. At present they are the local partner in five different matching grant projects, which is the maximum number of matching grant projects which the Rotary Foundation allows a club to be involved in at any one time. The others are:-

|                                    |                          |
|------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Wagga Wagga District               | Bed nets for Guadalcanal |
| RC Flinders Park (South Australia) | Bed nets for Guadalcanal |
| R.A.M.S (Peter Thomas)             | Bed nets for Guadalcanal |
| RC Wellington (New Zealand)        | Solar Power for schools  |

Whilst the bed net projects do not involve RC Honiara in a great deal of work, each is set up as an Adopt a Village type project where it is hoped that these clubs will further develop their support for their village with further matching grants. The implication of this for us is that we can only use one matching grant "slot" with RC Honiara. If the matching grant we seek is to involve RC Honiara, then we must sign off on our previous matching grant (IE the money must have all been disbursed for the purpose for which it was applied) before we can initiate another matching grant application.

We were made aware by the local Rotarians of the difficulty of getting transport between Tulagi and Honiara, and the complications this adds to our project. The difficulty we are having in getting the contents of our container from Honiara to Tulagi attest to this (refer to Container section later in this report ). However Linda McMillan is the member of the RC of Honiara who is clearly most committed to the success of our project, and is the one who has worked very hard for us to date, and was invaluable to Bob and I during this trip. RC Honiara are giving Linda the role of being dedicated to our Tulagi project during the next term. This is good news for two important reasons besides Linda's enthusiasm for Tulagi. First, a problem for RC Honiara is that no member of the club owns or has access to a boat which can travel to Tulagi. This has made keeping contact with the project very difficult with the cost of a passenger trip to Tulagi being in excess of \$AUD50 return. Linda has befriended a boat owner who makes regular trips to Tulagi, and should enable her to make more frequent trips there and keep more in touch with Tulagi. Second, another RC Honiara Rotarian - Phil Bradford - has agreed to help Linda with Tulagi. Phil is the Managing Director of Island Enterprises Ltd, described as electrical and mechanical contractors, agricultural and engineering supplies and ships chandlers. He can provide the technical back up and support which Linda needs to look after the local end of the project.

It was commented to us that the expatriates in the Solomon Islands all fall into one of three categories - missionaries, mercenaries, and misfits. The RC of Honiara has a very high turnover of members as many cycle through the club whilst on a two or three year contract to the Solomons. By their own admission, many fall into the "mercenary" category. Linda and Phil are two of the more long-standing members. Linda, who is a Canadian, has been more than eight years in the Solomons. Phil is also an old timer in Solomons terms. Both have more "missionary" in them many of the other Rotarians.

We had several meetings with RC Honiara members during our stay. further detail is under the specific proposed projects listed below.

### **Tulagi People**

Alphonse Selofae Bus./ Priv 32214

Michael Vavala Dir.of Health & Medical Services, Central Province Bus 32187

Alphonse and Michael came to Honiara and met with us at our hotel in Honiara on Wed (24/5). Alphonse has been helping us with our Tulagi contacts since the beginning of this project and accompanied the first team when they visited Tulagi. Michael is relatively newly appointed (5 months ago) as Director and Chief Medical Officer at Tulagi, and replaces Dr Gabrielle Salini. He is young, well educated, enthusiastic and appears keen to provide a good medical service for the province.

We discussed the findings from the first visit, and the project priorities as we saw them. Michael indicated that his highest priority was to ease the serious overcrowding of the hospital. Bob and I asked him to prepare a sketch plan of what he wanted, and we would discuss it with him further when we got to Tulagi.

Alphonse advised that Michael's brother - Simon Vavala - is a member of the Central Province Assembly and a contender to become Premier of Central province, replacing

Mark Kamekese, who was elected to the National Parliament in the recent election. We asked to meet him on our visit to Tulagi.

### **Australian High Commission**

Andrew Cumpston - Senior Officer for Aus-AID ,  
acting for Susan Bent - First Assistant to the High Commissioner.  
Stefan Knollmayer - Second Secretary Aus.-AID Bus 21561/ext266  
email: [stefan.knollmayer@dfat.gov.au](mailto:stefan.knollmayer@dfat.gov.au)

We made a courtesy visit to let the High Commission know what we were doing. They were quite interested to know and urged us to put out a press release so that the plans could be more widely known. They advised that the High Commissioner was very keen to publicise the fact that Australian interest and support for the Solomons extended beyond simply government support. If we can prepare a press release on our letterhead, and get it to them, they will ensure that it is circulated to all the right places in the Solomons.

They recommended that we make contact with the Community Sector Program (CSP) - the vehicle through which most Australian Government aid to the community is delivered, and also the Solomon Islands Association for Vocational and Rural Training Centres (SIAVRTC).

### **Community Sector Program (CSP)**

Dr. Frans Arentz - Team Leader - Bus 27503 Fax 27504  
email [frans@csp.com.sb](mailto:frans@csp.com.sb)

Frans commented that foreign governments including the Australian, are becoming aware that the churches provide perhaps the most secure and reliable organisations in the Solomon Islands for the delivery of community welfare programs. From once shunning them, the Australian Government has done a 180 degree turnaround to now seeks out the churches as partners in welfare projects. He recommended that we should make contact with Dr Derek Sikua newly appointed National Minister for Education. Also if we needed specific skills for some of our projects we should try Australian Volunteers International. The contact is Jo Maher who has a phone contact number here in Victoria - 9279 1796.

Fax 9419 1098 although he believes she is based in Port Vila.

### **Solomon Islands Association of Vocational & Rural Training Centres-SIAVRTC**

Robert Chris - Ass Project Mgr and Training Coordinator - Bus 30615  
Henry Lalo - President SIAVRTC and Principal Kaotave RTC - Guadalcanal

We visited the offices of SIAVRTC in company with Linda McMillan on Thursday (25/5). The Association has as members virtually all of the non government vocational and rural training centres in SI some 17 in all. The overwhelming majority of rural and technical training is conducted by SIAVRTC members. Technical and rural training has been considered somewhat as the "poor cousin" in training up to now. Those who fail to pass the exams in the more "academic" school system often "drop out" to take up rural and technical training. However a new education policy adopted by the national Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development aims to improve the status of Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) in SI. Under the policy all government and community schools will teach some TVET to students up to year nine. This includes the McMahan community school on Tulagi. After year nine, students will have the option of progressing for years ten to twelve to either a Provincial or National high school with a mainly academic syllabus, but with at least one technical/rural subject; or to a Rural/Technical Training College with a mainly rural/vocational syllabus

but will teach English and maths as well. This policy will require many of the RTCs to become much more professional and rigorous in the training they deliver.

SIAVRTC suggested that one way we may care to help is by helping some students to go on to the Vanga Teachers College to gain qualification as a TVET teacher. The cost is about \$2000 Sol per year for two years to train a teacher. Currently Vanga is taking about 20 new trainees per year, but is planning to expand to 40.

SIAVRTC advised us of a government run rural training school on the island of Small Gela which is fairly well equipped, but is very under used. SIAVRTC believed that the government would be only too happy to hand over management of the school to anyone who could manage and run it. They recommended that we try and visit the school on our visit to Tulagi. (We did! It is quite well equipped and has about a dozen buildings and some cattle yards. It is maintained by a couple of resident local families. It is in the "middle of nowhere" only accessible by boat and by foot from the nearby villages. Small wonder it is under utilised!)

**Don Bosco Selesian Technical Training Centre - Henderson - Phone 36555**

Fr Luciano Capelli (Not present - away in Italy during our visit)

Fr Ambrose (Catholic Communications for the Archdiocese)

Fr Dominic ( Parish priest for Tetere in eastern Guadalcanal)

Br Susuki

Neil Buendia (Building and maintenance manager for Don Bosco)

Home 36100 Mobile 76072 Email [bonegeski@yahoo.com](mailto:bonegeski@yahoo.com)

Bob and I visited and stayed at Don Bosco from Thursday evening (25/5) to Monday morning (29/5). Bob has developed a close working relationship with Don Bosco through his friendship with Fr Capelli. The first group to Tulagi (including Bob) met with Fr Capelli. Bob has corresponded with Fr Capelli since then, and met him again personally when he visited Australia earlier this year. Bob made a personal donation of 500 mosquito nets to Tulagi which Fr Capelli handed on to Fr Dominic for the mountain villages in Tetere. The nets were delivered to Don Bosco during our stay, and a very pleasant part of our stay was to attend Mass at Tetere on Sunday (28/5) and formally hand over the nets to the local community.

Malaria remains the largest single killer of children and infants in SI with mortality rates as high as 25% of births in some areas. Use of nets can make a big difference if accompanied by an education campaign. RC Honiara members reported on a project they had undertaken in Choisel Province involving net distribution and education of local villagers. They were able to achieve a reduction in infant mortality from over 80 per 1000 to around 3 per 1000. The nets we donated were the latest version used by RAMS which are long-life (5 years) and made from a fine white light net. The nets we saw used on Tulagi are provided by the Japanese embassy and are of a coarser blue material - larger holes - and rather hot to sleep under. We took a sample from the Don Bosco consignment to Tulagi, where the doctors agreed they would be far more effective, and probably more accepted by the locals. We should consider providing more nets, both to Tulagi and also to Don Bosco.

We were staying at Don Bosco to build and cement our relationship with them. Through his relationship with Bob, Fr Capelli has already offered to become a working partner with us in our efforts in SI. Our visit was aimed to establish a solid relationship for this partnership. Fr Capelli offered a practical start to the relationship by "lending" us his manager for building and maintenance, Neil Buendia, to accompany us on our visit to Tulagi. Neil is a 36 year Filipino who has worked for Don Bosco in SI for 5 years. He was attracted to SI by Fr Capelli for whom he worked in the Philippines during Fr Capelli's time there. He is a wonderful man! He plans and designs much of the building work undertaken by Don Bosco. They build their own facilities, and also

build for others as a means of revenue, and also to provide practical training for the students in building trades at Don Bosco. Neil has great experience of building in SI, and building with local labour. On Tulagi Neil was able to take the different concepts we came up with and turn them into drawings, and calculate the quantities of materials required, and cost the projects. The detail of this will be in the project sections following.

Our time at Don Bosco gave us the opportunity to meet the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Honiara, His Grace Adrian Smith, who is a wonderful Irishman who has been in SI since 1966. We were guests at a social evening he provides for the members of religious orders in his archdiocese (priests, brothers and sisters) on Friday evening (26/5). During the evening His Grace (call me Adrian) took the time to chat with us; draw out and correct many of our ideas and conceptions. Highly regarded throughout SI he is most concerned to ensure that the Church does not overreach itself by being drawn too far into the secular business of running the country. He is a supporter of developing ways of helping people to stay in their villages rather than becoming part of an urban slum on the fringe of Honiara. To do this he thinks we need to concentrate on teaching technical skills which are relevant to village life. For instance he doesn't think we need to teach motor mechanics to young students on Tulagi, although he concedes it would be popular. On Tulagi there is only one "goat track" and four motor vehicles which we counted. Of those four I only ever saw one move during our two days on the island. Young people learning motor mechanics on Tulagi would need to move to Honiara to make any use of their training.

The Churches all work pretty well together with the possible exception of the Mormons, and all are members of the Solomon Islands Christian Association (SICA) through which they pool their efforts, and provide services to all denominations to maximise the effectiveness of their facilities. For instance Don Bosco takes all comers into its school regardless of their religion.

The next day (Saturday 27/5) the Archbishop was visiting a copra plantation which has been owned (leased) by the Church for many years, and he invited us to go along for the trip. He picked us up from Don Bosco. At present it is in "Tick over" mode - producing just enough copra to pay for maintenance and the wages of the six or so locals who live there and maintain and operate the place. This is just enough to prevent squatters from moving in, and to justify the Church's retention of the lease. The archbishop said that he would be happy to turn the place over to anyone who could demonstrate that they could use it to the benefit of the local community. Someone said to us that the two "M's" missing from Melanesia are Management and Maintenance. I think the message for us was that the Churches, especially the Roman Catholics, would not necessarily welcome approaches from us for them to run our community welfare projects, as they are hard-pressed to come up with the people to adequately manage their own resources. He nevertheless offered to provide any advice or assistance he could to us in our endeavours. He is a man well worth contacting and visiting by future groups to SI,

His email address is [ahonccsi@solomon.com.sb](mailto:ahonccsi@solomon.com.sb)

Whilst at Don Bosco visiting the school I discovered that they have an Interact Club. I don't think they have any contact with Rotary, but just decided to call themselves Interact. I took the opportunity to visit their club meeting on Friday afternoon. There are about 12 or 13 members, and they do a number of social activities together, but are seeking to see what else they could do. I offered to see if our Interact Club would like to correspond with them, which can be done by email via Don Bosco. If Interact here is interested I'd be happy to visit a meeting of theirs to tell them something about the SI Interact club and its members, and to set things up.

On Friday afternoon we visited Tetera, the other Selesian "Parish" on Guadalcanal. It is about 20 kilometre east of Honiara, about 20 minutes from Don Bosco. This is a more rural setting and the Silesians have moved most of their rural training there, leaving Don Bosco - Henderson to concentrate on technical and mechanical trades and computing. However at Tetera there is also going to be a training facility for building and carpentry and joinery type skills. On the agriculture side they have chickens, pigs, goats, and grow rice. Also at Tetera the Silesians are building a hospital and clinic for the provincial government which will replace the antiquated clinic currently there, and become the major medical facility in eastern Guadalcanal.

The major industry in the region is palm oil production. The plantations and facilities here were severely damaged in around 2001 during the civil strife then which is called by the locals now "The Tension". The company which operates the plant - a PNG company - has spent millions on rebuilding its plant, and on building accommodation. The company is generally not able to find sufficient workers from the local Guadalcanal population (called Gualees) and so imports workers from Malaita. Malaita is a fairly large island to the north east of Guadalcanal - just beyond Tulagi and the Central Province islands. It is much poorer in natural resources than Guadalcanal, being rocky and with little arable land. Consequently Malaitans have always had to work hard to survive, and they have the reputation of being good and hard workers, particularly in comparison with the relatively indolent Gualees. Companies seeking labour prefer Malaitans, and the palm oil company has brought some 2000 or more to Tetera to work the plantation. In the past it was only the workers who were brought to Guadalcanal (it is about a three hour journey by boat to Malaita). However this all male group - often high on grog or beetle nut - caused friction with the local population; so now whole families have been brought and settled in barracks type accommodation.

This tension between Malaitan and Gualee on Guadalcanal (and also on Tulagi) was a major factor contributing to the Tension and civil strife seven years ago. The potential for a resurgence of trouble is there as large numbers of Malaitans who fled Guadalcanal during the Tension have now returned. During our visit all was calm and peaceful, and we experienced no problems. But the riots which broke out in April this year and delayed our visit, did so with no warning, and took almost everyone by surprise - not least the Australian Government. Many jobs have been lost as a result of businesses destroyed in both these periods of civil unrest (The Honiara Casino, burned down in April, employed 600) and SI is all the poorer for this. Recovery will be slow and painful. However SI is resource rich (land, gold, bauxite, fish, timber, possibly even oil) and if Australia is not paying attention and in there helping, there will certainly be others ready to step in. Already the European Union, the Japanese, the Malaysians and the Taiwanese all have strong presences in SI. SI is pretty much our nearest significant neighbour (Honiara is less than three hours flying time from Brisbane), so it is important for Australians to understand the situation there and to be seen to be trying to help. The Australian High Commission indicated to us that they think it is very important that this interest and help be seen to come not just from the Australian Government, but from all sectors of the Australian community.

So even though there are risks, to do nothing will surely increase those risks. I strongly believe that Tulagi is an important project, and one we should pursue with vigour.

## **The Container**

Joel Lutz - Patricks Logistics - Ph 24500 Mob 95056

The container had arrived safely to Honiara and has been padlocked by Linda and was waiting on the wharf. We believe that RC Honiara have been able to have wharf charges waived for us. The contents couldn't go on the Tina in the week we were

there because the Australian Federal Police were taking two police vehicles and fuel to another island. and this pretty much filled Tina's decks. Tina travels east one week then west the next. Tulagi is on the eastern run. Patricks have agreed to unpack the container and repack onto pallets as necessary for the trip. Alphonse has agreed to supervise unloading in Tulagi, and transport of the equipment to secure storage in the school for distribution by the next group. There is much anticipation at both the school and the hospital about the arrival of these goods. We believe that Patricks will transport our goods free of charge!

### **Tulagi Visit - Hospital and Medical Centre**

|                  |                           |
|------------------|---------------------------|
| Michael Vavala   | Medical Director          |
| Stewart Kaipoa   | Director Nursing          |
| Cliff Panda      | Health Promotion          |
| George Pego      | Nurse Training            |
| Salote Jacob     | Principal Nursing Officer |
| Alphonse Selofae |                           |

We took a canoe (Fibreglass, about 5 metres with a 40HP outboard) across to Tulagi early on Monday morning (29/5) accompanied by Neil Buendia from Don Bosco, and met with senior hospital staff. We discussed items already in train - a generator for the hospital, security fence. water tanks and general clean up and repair of guttering, window screens etc. Michael submitted a sketch plan of how he would like to expand the overall capacity of the hospital. It involved a new ward building; extensions to the existing pharmacy and X-ray rooms; a new clinic building and a kitchen facility. Michael indicated that he was hopeful of getting government assistance to build the new clinic building. Michael gave the new ward building as his greatest priority. We agreed to have Neil draw up and cost the ward building. It was decided to add the kitchen to the end of this building so that meals could go by trolley to all wards via the verandas. We plotted the location of the security fence, and Neil measured the length and calculated the cost of materials required. The hospital people decided that the size of the generator required was 20kva.

Neil advised that the building time for the ward project would be around 3 months. It was agreed that the local Tulagi community should make a significant contribution towards the building as an indication that they value the project for their community. This contribution was agreed to be that the locals would gather the sand and gravel screenings necessary for the concrete, and wash the salt from them. The lumber needed would be sourced on Tulagi and milled there. Finally travel, meals and accommodation for the workforce during their stay on Tulagi would be provided.

Don Bosco would provide Neil to supervise construction, and around 6 to 8 extra workers. Tulagi would provide around 6 local workers as well. Since this is essentially a building project and therefore something which will not be supported by the Rotary Foundation, we approached the Japanese embassy to consider funding the building under their Grassroots project. The hospital is to initiate an application for funding; Neil will provide the building specification and costs; and North Balwyn Rotary is to provide a letter as a supporting community organisation. It remains for us to provide further assistance with furnishing and equipping of the new wards.

### **Tulagi Visit - McMahon Community School**

|                |   |          |
|----------------|---|----------|
| Selwyn Luga    | Chief Education Officer, Central Province | Ph 32085 |
| Charles Kunu   | Principal McMahon Community School        |          |
| Moffat Lusa    | Deputy Principal - Secondary              |          |
| Alfred Kasineu | Deputy Principal - Primary                |          |

We visited the McMahon Community School on the Monday afternoon prior to our official visit on the Tuesday, and were disturbed by a number of issues in relation to previous assistance provided to the school:-

1. The toilets which we had rushed to renovate in order to prevent the threatened closure of the school remained locked because the septic system does not work. Effectively there remain no toilets available for the students.
2. We had received advice that the school had built a chicken house and sought a payment from us to fund the purchase of day old chickens. We have not paid out anything because we had asked the school to furnish a business plan for the chicken farming, and we have received no reply. However we found that the cash asked for is far in excess of the cost of day old chickens, and the chicken house has been built in the headmaster's back yard.
3. Two aluminium water tanks had been provided by an Ausaid grant. One was installed in the headmaster's back yard. The other had fallen when the tank stand collapsed in soft ground. and the aluminium tank had been punctured by the fall. This happened last October, and no action appears to have been taken to get the tank fixed.

We expressed our concern and disappointment about these matters, and stressed that we would use our observation of how well facilities are used and maintained as a guide to how much the facilities are wanted, and whether we should continue to provide support for the school. Charles apologized for these lapses; blamed some of them on lack of support from other staff, and promised to do better in future.

As a result of our impressions at the school from our visits, we have modified our views for future help. We do not think it appropriate to develop rural and agricultural training at McMahon in the near future. Instead we believe that a technical training facility which teaches carpentry, joinery and building trades would be a more appropriate facility. McMahon school has recently added a technical trades teacher to their staff, both to teach trade subjects in accordance with the new education policy (see section on visit to SIAVRTC above), and also to undertake some of the technical maintenance required at the school. There is an old concrete slab from a previous building which would allow a simple structure of poles and roof to be constructed over a floor of compacted local sand. Neil Buendia has drawn up a plan for this and costed the necessary materials. Our club could further assist with the supply of hand tools and other equipment which would be needed. We see this as a modest start which we can review to assess how it is used and developed by the school. We can provide further assistance and development if the school demonstrates that they will make good use of it.

We also believe that it will probably be necessary for us to resolve the matter of the septic system for the toilet block. Island Enterprises have inspected the existing system and given some advice as to what is needed. We were unable to establish for certain whether a new septic system is needed or whether the existing one can be repaired. Phil Bradford (member of RC Honiara and GM of Island Enterprises) offered to Linda to send a man across to Tulagi to supervise the work. This will probably need follow up by the next group!

Whilst on Tulagi we also met with Hon Simon Vavala member of the provincial assembly for Central Province, and a contender for the position of Premier for Central Province (made vacant when Mark Kamekese was elected to the national parliament). Simon Vavala is also brother of Michael Vavala, Medical Director. He was a typical politician, and fairly non-committal about how he could help, but he did express appreciation for our efforts, and was pleased we were there. I think future groups should

maintain contact with him, particularly if he goes on to become Premier of Central Province.

### **National Bank of the Solomon Islands**

Mark Corcoran - Manager Retail Banking Ph 20139 Mob 94640 Fax 26362  
email: [mcorcoran@nbsi.com.sb](mailto:mcorcoran@nbsi.com.sb)

By chance we met Mark at the Yacht Club after our return from Tulagi to Honiara. He told us that the National Bank of SI does indeed have a branch on Tulagi, a fact unknown to Linda and to other locals in Honiara. The branch is operated by the Church of Melanesia as an agent for the bank, and has only recently reopened after being burned down in an effort to cover up the theft of some bank funds. As a result of this experience the bank was not going to reopen the branch, but only did so after representations from the Church of Melanesia, which also reimbursed the bank for the lost money. Following this chance encounter we met with Mark again the following day. Mark has been in SI for about three years, following a longer period in PNG. He is not a Rotarian in SI, but was during his time in PNG. However he knows Wayne Morris well (Wayne is President of the Honiara Golf Club, and Mark is Vice President).

This contact opens some good opportunities for us. First it does mean that we can use the Bank to help with the delivery and receiving of funds. This will be particularly useful if we pursue the option of setting up micro-loans. Mark has indicated he would be prepared to help us in this way, Second it provides us with a second independent source of "intelligence" from Tulagi. In this respect he was able to obtain some background on Alphonse for us, and also to recommend that we make contact with Bishop Charles Koete, Bishop of Tulagi in the Church of Melanesia. Bishop Koete is as close to a local village leader as there is on Tulagi, and may be the key to enlisting local support for our projects. We did not discover this until we had returned to Honiara from Tulagi, so we leave this as a task for the next group.

The recent troubles in East Timor, have highlighted how little we Australians know about our near Pacific neighbours, and how important it is that we get to know more. If many of our club members take the time and trouble to visit SI in the coming months and years, and then talk to others about their experience, we can make a contribution to building this knowledge and understanding in Australia. The Australian High Commission staff stressed that it is important that engagement with our Pacific neighbours be from a wide spectrum of the Australian community, not just from government. This is why Rotary's efforts in SI and Timor and across the Pacific are important. We should maintain and increase our efforts, and then "Tell the World about them!"

### **Summary of Projects**

1. Container: Transport arranged so that goods can be in Tulagi for distribution by next group to visit SI.
2. Toilet Block: Renovation has been completed but awaits resolution of the septic problem. Island Enterprises have inspected the existing system and can advise whether it is fixable, or whether a new septic system is needed. Island Enterprises (Phil Bradford) have offered to send someone to Tulagi to supervise this work. Next group should follow up on this and ascertain whether we need to meet some cost.
3. Matching Grant One projects. All is in readiness for us to provide the funds so that work can commence at the school.

4. Matching Grant Two projects (Hospital) Neil Buendia has provided a quote for the cost of materials for the security fence, and also for the cost of repairing guttering and window screens etc at the hospital. Neil has also provided a quote for four new water tanks and stands to hold them.
5. Bob and I obtained a quote for the cost of a 20kva generator, the size it was agreed we need at the hospital. They are in stock in Port Moresby at present.

### **Possible Future Projects**

6. The next development for the school we would propose is a technical training facility. This fits well with the policy for Technical and Vocational training adopted in SI and McMahon school has recently appointed a technical teacher for this task. Neil from Don Bosco has drawn plans and costed a modest first stage. We should monitor progress with this first stage, and then assist development and expansion as necessary
7. We have suggested to the Bishop of Tulagi (through the principal of McMahon School, his brother) that if the church added water tanks to collect water from the roof of the church building in front of the hospital, this would provide fresh water for the community, and ease pressure on the hospital's water tanks. We understand this proposal was well received, and that the church may be prepared to meet the cost. This should be followed up by the next group.
8. The hospital's highest priority request is for a new ward building. We have discussed with them their needs and had Neil draw up plans and cost the materials necessary. We have approached the Japanese Embassy about funding the building under their "Grassroots" programme. The hospital is to initiate the application, with support from Don Bosco. We believe the application should have a very good chance of success. There would then be a role for us in equipping the wards.
9. We further explored the possibility of a micro-loan system for Tulagi and believe it would be valuable for the women. This project is made a good deal easier to organise now that we know there is a bank on Tulagi. The next task is to consider how and by whom the project could be managed locally.

We wish good luck, good weather and smooth sailing to the next group!

Bill and Bob