



Outlook bright for surgery in the Pacific Islands

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An ongoing specialist aid project aimed at capacity building in the Pacific Islands has achieved remarkable results, an article in the latest issue of the *ANZ Journal of Surgery* has concluded.

The Pacific Islands Project (PIP), funded by AusAID and managed by the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons, was launched in 1995 and has progressed through three phases. During this time it has sent more than 520 teams to 11 Pacific Island nations, providing more than 60,000 consultations and some 16,000 procedures.

Professor David Watters, co-author of the article and a regular visitor to Pacific Island nations, said that in addition to the delivery of specialist medical and surgical services that were not previously available in-country, PIP had contributed as a partner in capacity building with the Fiji School of Medicine and Ministries of Health of the individual nations.

“By 2011, Fiji School of Medicine, which began postgraduate specialist training in 1998, had awarded 51 doctors a diploma in surgery (1 year), 20 of whom had completed their Masters in Medicine (4 years),” Professor Watters said. “A critical mass of Pacific Island surgeons has been trained, so that sub-specialisation will be an option for the general surgeons of the larger island nations.”

Professor Watters said that PIP had been independently evaluated on the completion of every phase and had delivered on its design, to deliver services, and also helped to build capacity. The relationship established with the College throughout the project allowed Pacific Island graduates to access the Rowan Nicks scholarship, and the majority of MMed graduates had received International Travel Grants to attend the College’s Annual Scientific Congress.

He noted that AusAID had contributed some \$20 million over 16 years, and the value added from *pro bono* contributions by Specialist Teams, Specialty Coordinators and Project Directors amounted to an equivalent sum.

“With the emergence of Pacific Island-trained specialists, PIP is ready to move into a new phase where the agendas are set, monitored and managed within the Pacific, and the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons fulfils the role of a service provider,” Professor Watters said.

The *ANZ Journal of Surgery*, now in its 80th year and published by Wiley-Blackwell, is the pre-eminent surgical journal published in Australia, New Zealand and the South-East Asian region. The Journal is dedicated to the promotion of outstanding surgical practice, and research of contemporary and international interest.



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