

Media Release

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For Immediate release

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Rotary provides shelter to PNG Cyclone victims

In the wake of the cyclone that tore through Eastern Papua New Guinea earlier this week, local Rotarians have taken up a key role in providing assistance to the devastated area.

Rotarians from District 9800 have dispatched emergency shelter, bedding and clean water provisions to be airlifted into the Oro Bay and Popondetta regions which were hit by Cyclone Guba on November 24. The cyclone has reportedly left 160 dead with many more missing throughout the affected regions.

In a significant logistical undertaking, volunteer Rotarians have been working around the clock with Australian Defence Force personnel to deploy over 220 "Shelterboxes" to communities where homes, workplaces and vital infrastructure have been destroyed.

The Rotary International Shelterbox program delivers basic necessities to those stricken by natural and man-made disasters, providing basic items such as 10-man tents, blankets, wet weather gear, stoves, basic tool kits, water containers and water purification. The Shelterboxes are donated by local Rotary clubs with help from the public and corporate supporters and are shipped out in response to regional disasters.

Rotary District 9800 Governor, John Davis expects the assistance efforts to be an ongoing affair.

"Rotary will undoubtedly have a role in the rebuilding phase where we can provide materials and manpower to assist with the repair, rebuilding and re-equipping of public structures such as schools and medical facilities," Davis said.

However these efforts will need to wait until the situation has stabilised somewhat, Davis suggesting that an assessment of requirements by the government of Papua New Guinea will be the first determinant of just what needs to be done to help rebuild.

"Meanwhile, there is a severe shortage of provisions such as food, fuel and materials, as roads and bridges in the area have all suffered severe damage. The Shelterboxes at least provide some relief from the elements and supplement humanitarian food drops in the region," Davis said yesterday.

"For a nation that has helped our own nation in one of our greatest times of need, it's good to be able to lend a hand and make a difference in getting people in these regions back up on their feet."

Donations can be made to aid Rotary's efforts in supplying Shelterboxes to disaster ravaged communities via the Shelterbox international website, www.shelterbox.org