

# The Papua New Guinea – Australia Volcanological Service Support Project (VSS)

## Background

Since 1995 AusAID has invested a substantial amount of funding in the Papua New Guinea (PNG) Volcanological Service through its *Papua New Guinea – Australia Volcanological Service Support (VSS) Project*, mainly through the PNG Government's [Rabaul Volcanological Observatory \(RVO\)](#). RVO is a branch of the Geological Survey Division of the PNG Department of Mining. It is concerned primarily with mitigating the effects of volcanic eruptions through volcano monitoring and eruption forecasting, volcanic-hazard and risk analysis, and public-awareness activities. Geoscience Australia (GA) is the Managing Contractor for the VSS Project.



*G.A.M. Taylor's (G.C.), photograph of the effects of pyroclastic flows from the Mount Lamington eruption 1951. BMR Journal*

## VSS Project – to 1999

The VSS Project was established as a result of the [destructive 1994 volcanic eruption \(PDF 878kB – AusAID Focus – Vol. 15 no.3\)](#) at Rabaul and was aimed at strengthening the PNG volcanological service through RVO. The VSS Project had two phases:

Phase 1: purchase of new monitoring equipment.

Phase 2: a more comprehensive program made up of four components

- Volcano Monitoring: a major technical upgrade of monitoring equipment at five high-risk volcanoes
- Technical Foundations: enhancement of RVO analytical skills and of the RVO knowledge base of PNG volcanoes, especially Rabaul volcano (this included a major geophysical survey, RELACS, of the Rabaul area)
- Volcanic Hazard Information Management: provision of a volcanic-hazard mapping facility at RVO, designed to enhance community preparedness to the effects of volcanic eruptions.
- Observatory support: provision of transport, improved communication links, and public-awareness materials (including also building refurbishment at RVO headquarters).

The major part of this Project was completed in 1999, but GA has continued to manage on-going AusAID support to RVO through a low-level 'twinning' arrangement.

## Twinning Program – previously VSS project

Following the success of the VSS Project, AusAID agreed to fund lower level extension to the Project under a Twinning arrangement to help maintain and support the outcomes of the VSS Project. The Twinning Program commenced at the completion of the VSS Project, initially for a two-year period, followed by a further five-year extension. This support is currently funded by AusAID until June 2008.

The principal aim of the 'twinning' arrangement is to ensure that the investment made by AusAID during the 1996-99 VSS Project, is secured through an on-going strengthening of the relationship between RVO and GA. The goal of the Twinning Program is to support the strengthening of RVO capacity to meet its organisational goals and in particular the monitoring of volcanoes in PNG. Furthermore, the Program is designed to ensure that RVO's important role in emergency-management in PNG is sustained.