



Photo: © Trevor Thornton



Mr Andrew Jacobs

Introduction

On behalf of the PacWaste team, my colleagues at the European Union and my partners at the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP), I would like to convey sincere condolences to the people of Fiji following the devastation caused by Tropical Cyclone Winston in Fiji last month, particularly in light of the tragic loss of life.

Events such as these highlight the acute vulnerability of Pacific island communities to extreme weather events and natural disasters. They are also a reminder of the enormous waste problem created by natural disasters, and the potential for these events to release hazardous materials, such as asbestos, into the environment.

As was the case when Cyclone Pam caused significant destruction in Vanuatu and other locations across the Pacific, PacWaste was immediately able to provide information to officials in Fiji about the known locations of asbestos in the areas affected. This information ensured that first responders could avoid such premises if they had been damaged, or conduct any clean-up using approaches to safeguard their health.

Over the past few weeks it has been very encouraging to see communities, agencies and governments rally around the disaster recovery effort. Here at PacWaste we stand shoulder to shoulder with these efforts and have formally offered to provide assistance with the post disaster waste clean-up in the areas affected.

You can keep up to date with all our latest news, as it happens, on the PacWaste website at www.sprep.org/pacwaste.

We hope that you enjoy the third edition of PacWaste News and our first for 2016.

Mr Andrew Jacobs
European Union Ambassador for the Pacific
European Union Delegation for the Pacific, Suva

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LATEST NEWS



In the Pacific region, the increased participation of women in the waste management sector is paying dividends. Photo: D.Haynes/SPREP

PacWaste celebrates the increased participation of women in waste management

In the Pacific region, the tide is turning when it comes to [the participation of women in waste management](#). Historically, the solid and hazardous waste management sector has been dominated by men but recent evidence would suggest that female participation is increasing. PacWaste is very proud to be at the heart of these efforts.

A cleaner and safer environment is in everybody's best interest. But when it comes to waste management it's crucial to acknowledge that women and men may have very different views of what waste is, what methods of disposal are the most desirable or affordable, and how improvements to waste management can be best achieved. When the voices of women are heard and taken into consideration, waste management initiatives are more likely to meet everyone's needs.



The stockpile of scrap metal at Majuro's Batkan Landfill is being cleared to make way for new sustainable waste management initiatives. Photo: T.Hartley/SPREP

Improving waste security in Majuro

Preparations are continuing for the introduction of new sustainable waste management initiatives in Majuro, Republic of the Marshall Islands, through PacWaste's integrated atoll waste management pilot scheme.

To date, a major obstacle to the implementation of improved waste management is the fact that the Batkan landfill is operating at near capacity. Although a new landfill is planned for the future, space urgently needs to be cleared at the current site to make room for non-recyclable wastes to be deposited and compacted.

To achieve this, PacWaste is supporting the Majuro Atoll Waste Company (MAWC) to [offload fifteen shipping containers of scrap metal](#) to Brisbane, Australia. While exporting low value items is generally not ideal, in this instance there is an urgent need to provide the site with waste security, and avoid a situation where waste ends up being deposited in other, non-controlled, locations.

THE STATE OF ASBESTOS IN THE PACIFIC



A new PacWaste publication explores the serious, but uneven, asbestos problem in the Pacific region. Photo: E.Vanderburg/SPREP

The State of Asbestos in the Pacific

Globally, more than 100,000 people die each year from illnesses related to asbestos exposure. But until recently, there has been little information available about the prevalence of asbestos in the Pacific islands region.

On the occasion of Global Asbestos Awareness Week (1–7 April) PacWaste is releasing a new synthesis publication called *The State of Asbestos in the Pacific*. The new publication provides information about the location and relative risk of asbestos materials on 25 different islands across 13 Pacific island countries.

The data used to compile the document was gathered through the PacWaste baseline asbestos surveys, conducted in 2014 and 2015. *The State of Asbestos in the Pacific* will be available on the [PacWaste website](#) from April 2.



Postcard from Tanna, Vanuatu

Trainer, Dr Trevor Thornton, conducts PacWaste healthcare waste management training with the staff at Lenakel Hospital in Tanna. Photo: E.Vanderburg/SPREP

When the news of the cyclone in Fiji started to filter through to communities on remote Tanna island in Vanuatu, the mood was sombre and the empathy palpable. Less than one year earlier, Tanna and nearby Erromango had been devastated by Category 5 Tropical Cyclone Pam and today – a year on, the re-building continues.

Lenakel Hospital, which services a population of 32,000 people across Tanna and six surrounding islands, was hit hard by Cyclone Pam, with more than one million dollars (US) worth of damage sustained. Staff who were at the hospital when the cyclone hit, clearly remember the sight of nearby homes collapsing and roofing iron “flying around, just like paper.”

While the cyclone damage is still quite apparent around Lenakel, the 43-bed hospital is fully functioning once more. In recent weeks the hospital has been a hive of activity, with the arrival of new equipment and the delivery of specialised healthcare waste management training on-site – activities undertaken through PacWaste.

Through PacWaste, the hospital is being equipped with a new high temperature incinerator that is specially designed to destroy healthcare waste safely and effectively. Importantly, the incinerator is equipped with two combustion chambers – one to safely burn healthcare waste and another to burn the smoke generated from the first chamber. This technology ensures that very few emissions are released as a result of the incineration process compared to the previous system.

Whilst in Lenakel, [PacWaste is also delivering specialised training in the management and disposal of healthcare waste](#). The practical training programme, which has now been delivered at five separate sites across Vanuatu, has been tailored to build the capacity of hospital staff to safely manage and handle healthcare waste, from the point of creation through to treatment and disposal.

Lenakel Hospital Midwife, Ms Betty Simon, explains that the training was the most thorough she had received in her eight years at Lenakel hospital: “I’ve had some basic training in the past, but nothing as detailed as this one. Today we have porters, drivers, nurses, laundry staff, cleaners, a radiographer, a pharmacy officer, lab technicians all at the training. It’s good for all the people to be involved so that everyone at the hospital understands what is expected of them when it comes to managing our waste properly. For me, I have learned something here today about proper disposal of sharps, I plan to teach my nurses about disposing of needles properly.”



Lenakel Hospital Midwife, Ms Betty Simon, participates in a practical ‘walk-through’ exercise to assess existing healthcare waste management systems at Lenakel Hospital. Photo: E.Vanderburg/SPREP



Incinerator Operator, Mr Henry Nalpini, who has been working at Lenakel hospital for 23 years, is looking forward to the forthcoming commissioning of the new healthcare waste incinerator. Photo: E.Vanderburg/SPREP

USEFUL LINKS



Students from Years 7 and 8 will present to other classes at Vaiala Beach School about the importance of making smart choices for a cleaner and safer Pacific. Photo: A.Carvan/SPREP

Free environmental education resources available for Pacific island schools

A group of lucky students at Vaiala Beach School in Samoa have become the first in the Pacific to receive free copies of PacWaste's colourful new educational poster. Called 'Smart choices for a cleaner and safer Pacific' the poster promotes a range of simple actions that contribute to reduced waste and increased resilience.

Schools across the Pacific can request free copies of the poster, printed on 100% recycled paper, by emailing SPREP's Information Resource Centre and Archives (IRCA) at SPREP_IRCA@sprep.org

The 'Smart Choices' posters are available in both English and French. Electronic copies can also be downloaded from www.sprep.org/pacwaste



Help us to know what you know

To help inform some upcoming activities, PacWaste has created a very short and simple online survey to establish baseline levels of hazardous waste awareness across the region.

The survey is very short (ten questions) and only takes three-four minutes to complete. Your answers will help shape an exciting new PacWaste education and awareness campaign that is taking place across the Pacific region later this year.

If you live in a Pacific island country or territory and you have three minutes to spare, we would love it if you could answer the survey by visiting:

www.surveymonkey.com/r/JRZF8XS

Everybody who completes the short survey will go into a draw to win a SPREP prize pack that includes a t-shirt, hat, USB stick, posters and stickers. Photo: SPREP

Coming up

- Deadline for PacWaste healthcare waste management training tender submissions: *29 March, 2016*
- Deadline for EoI for provision of graphic design services for the PacWaste project: *30 March, 2016*
- Global Asbestos Awareness Week: *1-7 April, 2016*

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(685) 21929 | PO Box 240 | Apia, Samoa | sprep@sprep.org | www.sprep.org

Our vision: *The Pacific environment – sustaining our livelihoods and natural heritage in harmony with our cultures.*

PacWaste
PACIFIC HAZARDOUS WASTE MANAGEMENT



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