

# Three Australians make a difference

Marie Sexton, Asia-Pacific Special Interest Group

The Asia-Pacific Special Interest Group is pleased to report on three Australians who have made a marked contribution to our local region. Canberra members heard about their work at a recent lunch-time meeting.

George Miller, who has been closely associated with Indonesia and Southeast Asia for more than thirty years, told of his recent trip to the island of Flores in Eastern Indonesia where the Nusatenggara Association, of which he is a member, has been encouraging small grass-roots projects for the past decade. The aim of the Australian-based Association is to help improve village infrastructure by providing advice, expertise and a limited funds to various community groups undertaking works such as providing clean water and building school facilities. One of their projects which George described to the meeting was the building of library shelves and the donation of a small collection of books to a school. George said that areas such as Flores had not been much effected by the present financial crisis in Indonesia as they had

never received much funding before anyway. For details of the work of the Nusatenggara Association contact: miller@cyberone.com.au.

Ewan Maidment is the project officer, Pacific Manuscripts Bureau, which is housed at the Australian National University. It is a co-operative undertaking of major libraries interested in the microfilming of original documents related to the Pacific. Member libraries come from Australia, New Zealand, the United States and the Pacific. Through the project, copies of the microfilm are distributed world-wide. Its website is <http://rspas.anu.edu.au/pambu/>.

Ewan recently visited the Cook Islands at the urging of the National Library of New Zealand. He filmed archives of the Cook Islands Federation which was the Maori government of the Cook Islands between 1890 and 1900 when the Cook Islands were a British Protectorate. In 1900 the Cook Islands were annexed by Britain and sovereignty was transferred to New Zealand in 1901. He also microfilmed early records of the New Zealand administration of the Cook Islands, between 1900 and 1941. The work was sometimes tedious and took care as the paper used in the press-copy letter-books was thin and fragile. To compensate for the amount of work needed over a number of weeks, the beauty of the Cook Islands was a pleasure to Ewan. Unfortunately, Barry Howarth, a volunteer researcher working on the project with Ewan, got dengue fever and was very ill for some time.

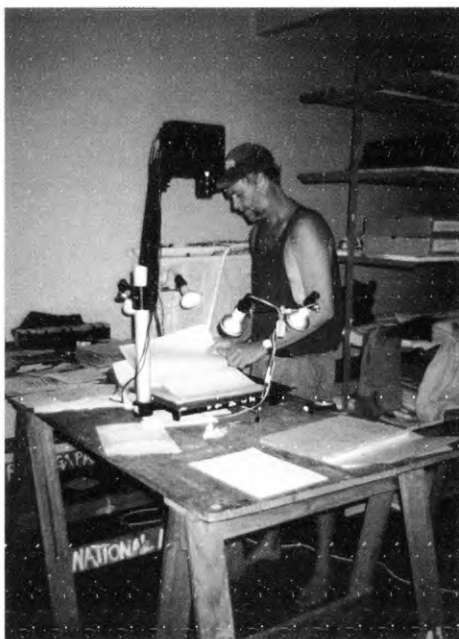
Sarah Arundel, now working in the Australian Tax Office, volunteered through AusAID's Australian Youth Ambassadors for Development, a scheme which places young people in projects where they can use their expertise. Sarah was asked to set up the library of the Vanuatu Family Health Association. De-



*Sarah Arundel (l) in Vanuatu with Lonia Mesek from the Vanuatu Family Health Association*

spite hailing from Queensland, Sarah found the heat and humidity in Port Vila to be initially very daunting. She strove to set up a system which could be maintained when she left. As a lot of the materials were pamphlets and small booklets, she arranged it as a self-help collection. Sarah could see that it would be useful for the local staff to increase their computer skills and record keeping abilities so she emphasised this in staff training. Sex education is a sensitive topic in Vanuatu and Sarah admired the fact that the locals were keen to improve their lives through an understanding of reproduction. Sarah reported that she became quite fluent in the local pidgin language, Bislama, as she felt that it was important for her to build up rapport with the locals if they were to regard the collection as their's when she returned to Australia.

The members of APSIG were very impressed by these presentations and the application and dedication which these Australians showed in contributing to the region. ■



*Ewan Maidment works hard microfilming for the Pacific Manuscripts Bureau in the Cook Islands*