

ADF aid vital for survival

PNG health disaster looms

Emily Macdonald, Merryn Johns

The Australian Defence Force will spend weeks delivering lifesaving aid to our Papua New Guinean neighbours who are now battling disease, hunger and a lack clean drinking water following a deadly landslide.

A village was wiped out and up to 2000 people buried alive on May 24 when a landslide hit a remote mountainous region in Enga province.

The Australian \$2.5m aid mission, the first deliveries of which arrived on Tuesday, were crucial with the United Nations labelling the region at "significant risk" of potentially deadly diarrhoea and malaria outbreaks.

Much of the area's water flows through the landslide site which is now a 600 metre-long graveyard.

"The creeks now flowing from the debris are contaminated, posing a significant risk of disease outbreak," the UN's migration agency report said.

"There are no methods being used to treat the water to make it safe for drinking."

The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade led humanitarian mission is delivering emergency relief supplies such as shelter, hygiene kits and support for women and children.

The supplies are being transported by the Royal Australian Air Force into Wapenamanda Airport in Enga Province.

Flight Lieutenant Toby Richter, captained a C-27J Spartan into the remote area.

"It's an opportunity to help



Picture: AFP

make a positive impact on people's lives during a very difficult

time, especially those directly affected by the disaster," he said.

"We have a big mission ahead of us in support of our PNG family."

Flt Lt Richter said Enga Province was an extremely challenging region of PNG to access due its mountainous topography, associated weather conditions and security considerations.

"This makes the delivery of large amounts of relief aid particularly difficult as there are only a handful of airfields suitable to support these operations, and the airfields are not always accessible.

"Fortunately, we have been operating the C-27J Spartan in PNG under the Defence Pacific Air Program for several rotations now, and our level of experience operating in these mountainous regions is very high."

Defence adviser to PNG based at the Australian High Commission in Port Moresby, Colonel Travis Gordon, said the two countries had a long tradition of mutual friendship.

"Australia is proud to be a partner that PNG knows will respond quickly in times of trouble," Colonel Gordon said.

"As always, Australia, and the ADF, stand ready to respond with our PNG brothers and sisters."



Australian Girls Choir member Brooklyn Cate, Lockhart River State School student Quintezzah Dorman and Australian Girls Choir member Jacinta Ellis. Picture: Kylie Lee-Archer

Choir exchange on song

Catherine Duffy

Nothing unites people quite like music.

This sentiment rang true for members of the Australian Girls Choir and their Far North Indigenous counterparts this week as they took part in a reverse travel exchange program.

The program, facilitated by not-for profit organisation Girls From Oz, involved 12 members of the AGC to travel to Lockhart River and experience a week

on country, with local schoolchildren acting as their guides.

Year 12 student Brooklyn Cate from Sydney said it was exciting to meet the people they had raised money for and put faces to names.

"It's so cool to see such a different culture and it's exciting to meet the girls we've been raising money for," Miss Cate said.

Lockhart River State School student Quintezzah Dorman said she enjoyed showing the girls how to

make grass skirts and bush tucker.

"We showed the girls how to make (grass skirts) and bush tucker," she said.

Despite not liking singing, Miss Dorman said she was happy to be involved in the exchange. The Australian Girls Choir and Lockhart River State School students engaged in cultural and musical workshops including singing practice ahead of a combined performance at the local church on Friday night.

Miles doesn't favour stadium

Hayden Johnson, Taylah Fellows

Premier Steven Miles has slapped down talk of Brisbane getting a new stadium in time for the Olympic and Paralympic Games, but acknowledged upgrading the Queensland Sport and Athletics Centre is yet to be properly assessed.

Brisbane 2032 chief executive Cindy Hook on Wednesday urged concerned Queenslanders to "speak up" and demand an Olympic Games stadium a growing city needed.

Mr Miles said Ms Hook was, like everyone, entitled to an opinion, but said Queenslanders were not in favour of a new stadium.

He defended the lack of a cost-benefit analysis for Victoria Park, but acknowledged an investigation into using Nathan's Queensland Sports and Athletics Centre could also reveal it to be a poor use of taxpayer cash.

"That'll be a consideration for government but the early advice is that it will be a suitable venue, that it will provide a legacy for athletics for our state," he said.

"The existing facility is one of our most used stadiums and this will effectively replace it with a brand new one."

Mr Miles insisted the Nathan facility remained the best option for Brisbane.

"It will allow us to deliver a fantastic games under the International Olympic Committee's new norms and to ensure that we spend what we have now on Queenslanders and their households," he said.

Ms Hook this week used a QUT Business Leaders' Forum to call for people to make their views known to Mr Miles.

"If you think Brisbane is a growing city that needs a new stadium I encourage you might want to speak up on that," she said.

Her response drew significant applause.

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