



15 May 2009

Prime Minister John Key auctioned his arm cast to support our work in the Solomon Islands | Photo courtesy Francis Till



Dear Supporter,

It is always a great joy for me to return to my homeland, the Solomon Islands. And last month that was what I was able to do, thanks to the quick thinking of a Fred Hollows Foundation NZ supporter.

Liz Beavon, a member of the New Zealand Police working with the Regional Assistance Mission in the Solomon Islands (RAMSI) met the Prime Minister, John Key, when he was visiting there in January. A great advocate for the Foundation, she suggested to the Prime Minister that he auction the cast from his broken arm and donate the proceeds to Hollows NZ to restore sight in the Solomon Islands.

And that's just what he did.

The Prime Minister's pain became Hollows NZ's gain, with proceeds from the auction funding two desperately needed surgical trips to restore the sight of Solomon Islanders.

Last month I travelled to the capital Honiara and Buala in the remote Ysabel province. I was joined on the outreach by three Solomon Islands eye doctors, all graduates of the Pacific Eye Institute, and four local eye nurses, all trained by me. These outreach trips offer critical eye services to the local rural population, but also provide a valuable opportunity for supervised training of eye students and graduates.

During the two weeks we saw over 500 patients and performed 114 sight restoring operations. The youngest of these was a five-year-old with cataracts in both eyes and the oldest a 93-year-old grandfather who had been completely blind for three years.



The Fred Hollows Foundation NZ

**YES I would like to make a donation of:**

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My cheque/money order payable to The Fred Hollows Foundation is enclosed.

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There is always a backlog of surgeries on these trips and this was no exception.

But what was unusual about this trip was that, with no doctor presently resident in Buala, the team was called upon to perform an emergency caesarean shortly after our arrival.

We have encountered many challenging situations during outreach throughout the Pacific, but this was a first for us! This is an example of how under-resourced health systems can be in the Pacific, particularly in remote areas. I'm not sure what would have happened if we hadn't been there.

The last patient we saw at the National Referral Hospital in Honiara was Lina Simbe, a 68-year-old grandmother from Marovo in the Western Province. She had been blind for two years in both eyes. It had taken the family a long time to raise the money to pay for her 18-hour trip to Honiara by boat.

Lina arrived on our last day of surgery and was operated on that evening. The following day, she was led to the eye clinic by her daughter. It was a joyous and emotional moment for all of us when the eye pad was removed. Lina cried and hugged her daughter and the staff nurse. We had to caution her not to cry because of her surgery. Then her granddaughter was brought in, and the tears started again! It was the first time Lina had ever seen her.

We hope to restore sight to Lina's other eye during our second outreach to the Solomons in June, also funded by the proceeds from the cast auction.

I would like to personally thank you for supporting the ground-breaking blindness prevention work that Hollows NZ is doing in the Pacific. Even the smallest donation will help us restore sight to Pacific people – please give as generously as you can.



**John Szetu**  
**Director, The Pacific Eye Institute**

*Dr John Szetu  
| Photo courtesy  
Glen Howey*



PS: A special thank you to Ganesh Cherian, the winning bidder of the auction. Ganesh, who owns Lower Hutt-based Glover Memorials with his wife Lyndi, talks about what motivated him to donate on our website. Visit [www.hollows.org.nz](http://www.hollows.org.nz) for the full interview.

Please use this space to tell us your views, what you would like to read in future, and why you support The Fred Hollows Foundation NZ.

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**Do we have your email address?** Our newsletter is now available by email, so if you would like to receive your newsletter this way, please confirm your email address below.

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The Fred Hollows Foundation NZ, Private Bag 99909, Newmarket, Auckland 1149.  
To speak to our Fundraising Department, please call (09) 304 0524.



**The Fred Hollows  
Foundation NZ**