

# Postcard from Kirakira



**M**y partner and I are working in Kirakira, the main town in Makira Province in the Solomon Islands. Our life here is fantastic: a 2 year holiday in tropical paradise.

Rural Solomon Islanders – 85% of the population – are subsistence farmers and fishers. They are self sufficient in what they need to survive: water from clear streams, fresh food from their gardens, and fish from the ocean. They build houses from pandanus grass and sago palm. Lifestyles could not be more different from those of Australians.

The Solomon Islands struggle with its pathetic legal system and economic chaos, but we feel assured of safety and security through traditional laws and customs. The health system is financed directly by AusAID so even the country's economic collapse affects us only indirectly.

The aims of the health care system are modest: safety in childbirth, immunisation, and treatment for malaria, pneumonia, and tuberculosis. Tuberculosis is a significant problem. The disease was introduced by Europeans who believed the tropical climate would cure them. Solomon

Islanders are still dying as a result.

There is little need for expensive interventions for the management of chronic diseases which are only just emerging here. We treat conditions we can cure. Our patients recover and are immensely grateful.

*Rosalie Schultz*