



## IMPROVING CARE FOR SNAKE BITE VICTIMS IN PAPUA NEW GUINEA: A PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN THE AUSTRALIAN AND PNG GOVERNMENTS, ACADEMIA AND THE PRIVATE SECTOR

PNG HAS SOME OF THE HIGHEST SNAKE BITE DEATH RATES IN THE WORLD. IN PARTNERSHIP WITH CSL, AUSTRALIA IS HELPING TO SAVE LIVES BY IMPROVING ACCESS TO ANTIVENOM AND STRENGTHENING PATIENT CARE.

### PNG'S DEADLY SNAKES

There are estimated to be more than 1,000 annual deaths due to snake bites in PNG, with nearly half of all fatalities involving children.

Papuan taipans cause more than 90% of all cases admitted to Port Moresby General Hospital. Injuries suffered, particularly when effective antivenom treatment is delayed, include spontaneous bleeding, irreversible paralysis, and sometimes muscle damage, heart rhythm problems and acute kidney injury.

### AUSTRALIA TO IMPROVE SNAKE BITE SERVICES IN PNG

Sequiris Pty Ltd, a subsidiary of the Australian health company CSL Limited, has recently agreed to provide an annual donation of 600 vials of snake and marine creature antivenom to PNG. This will more than triple the supply of antivenom in PNG. The donation is valued at more than PGK2.5 million annually.

To maximise the value of this donation, the Australian Government has agreed to fund a Snake Bite Research Project, which aims to:

- build local scientific and medical infrastructure and capacity for snakebite treatment in PNG;

- improve access to safe affordable and life-saving antivenom; and
- translate research findings into practice to save lives.

The Project provides medical services to victims of snake bites, awareness-raising and training for community members and health workers. It also supports the effective use and distribution of antivenom, including supporting clinics to upgrade their cold chain systems.

The project is being managed by the University of Melbourne's Australian Venom Research Unit and is delivered through the Port Moresby-based Charles Campbell Toxinology Centre (CCTC).

The CTCC operates the Port Moresby General Hospital Snakebite Clinic and undertakes research and outreach activities.

The CTCC will also offer two new Master of Medical Science scholarships to University of PNG students who will participate in comprehensive monitoring and evaluation services and health worker training in snakebite management.



First aid training for communities as part of the Snake Bite Project.