



footscape

Newsletter

January 2018

Happy new year to Footscape members and supporters. The beginning of 2018 coincides with expansion of our Diabetes Foot Care Kits activity. As part of our work with the *Asylum Seeker Resource Centre* Footscape initially commenced funding foot care kits for organisation members with Diabetes during 2015. The objective being to promote recommended Diabetic foot care practices upon a daily basis. After achieving positive outcomes the Footscape Committee now intends to expand this project to also reach Aboriginal and Homeless persons encountering Diabetes. Given the historical complex health needs of these population groups affected individuals remain vulnerable to associated Diabetic foot complications and amputation.



From the
CEO

Footscape will therefore provide one hundred Diabetes Foot Care Kits for project affiliate organisations *Cohealth* and *Your Community Health* for distribution to Asylum Seekers, Aboriginal persons and Homeless persons attending their Podiatry services with Diabetes. Cohealth and Your Community Health are responsible for providing public Podiatry services in the Darebin, Melbourne, Moonee Valley, Moreland and Yarra local council regions. Cohealth is concurrently responsible for providing services to the *Victorian Aboriginal Health Service*. Footscape acknowledges *The Eastweb Fund* for making a financial contribution towards this project.

In this newsletter Footscape welcomes the following article from John Rodsted of *SafeGround* (<http://safeground.org.au/>), an Australian humanitarian organisation that works to minimise the impacts and legacies of war. SafeGround advocates the eradication of indiscriminate legacy weapons such as landmines, cluster bombs and nuclear weapons

From the CEO

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that continue to maim and kill civilians long after the fighting of a war has ended. In his article John details the ongoing impact of World War 2 upon the neighbouring Solomon Islands, Papua New Guinea and Palau with the mission of SafeGround to eliminate the resultant aftermath.

Recent tensions on the Korean Peninsula and the use of landmines in the demilitarised zone have served as a reminder of the horrendous injuries that may potentially be suffered. Trauma encountered through disturbance of a landmine may range from blindness and deafness to loss of limbs and extensive burns. Sometimes this results in death through blood loss, shock or unavailability of urgently needed medical treatment. Survivors face severe pain and extensive surgery, often made worse by financial difficulties and psychological trauma. I hope Podiatrists and other health professionals specialising in foot and lower limb health gain appreciation of the ongoing impact of indiscriminate legacy weapons.

*Anthony Lewis
Chief Executive Officer*

World War 2 in the Pacific

When you ask a younger person about World War 2 then first thing they often say is it happened a long time ago. They may have seen an old movie or two but the current batch of documentaries holds little interest to them. Their focus is on current events like Afghanistan, Iraq and Syria and relative ancient history to them may extend to the war in Vietnam that ended 43 years ago. It's a long stretch for them to look back 73 years and understand that that conflict tore the world apart and created dangerous legacies that are still felt to this day.

The Pacific Theatre of conflict began with the Japanese bombing of Pearl Harbour in Dec 1941 and ended with the dropping of the two Atomic Bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki Aug 1945.

After the attack on Pearl Harbour by the Imperial Japanese Navy in Dec 1941, they rapidly expanded across the Asia Pacific region unabated until the United States Marine Corp counter attacked them on Guadalcanal in Aug 1942. The push back had begun and this maelstrom would march across many an idyllic Pacific Nation until the wars end.

Once hostilities were ended the focus was to establish political control over Japan and repatriate all soldiers from all sides to their homes as quickly as possible. Huge stockpiles of munitions and machinery were spread across the region and these too had to be disposed of. In the rush to get home, much of this disposal was roughly done. Millions of tonnes of bombs and equipment were simply dumped in the sea. In 1945 this seemed like an adequate method of disposal.



Team from Cleared Ground Demining removes a beach mine from a mangrove sump

The reality is that much of the disposal was undertaken in shallow water near beaches and the disposal was not exhaustive. Simply put, much was left behind or dumped in a way that was still accessible or created a pollution risk.

So much for the good news.

The bad news is most battle areas were ignored and many areas were simply abandoned leaving miss fired bombs and booby traps still in place guaranteeing the local communities that the danger from World War 2 would continue for a very long time.

Just because a bomb is old does not make it safe.

Communities had to adjust and life was bent around the presence of dangerous areas and items. Areas that had been used for farming were left and the jungle took hold again. Many coastal areas became polluted by the leaching toxins from sea dumped munitions. The legacy of danger from World War 2 was not over. It had just entered a new phase.

SafeGround researchers have been aware of this danger for many years and have been undertaking historical research on this impact for 10 years. Long and detailed study has mapped the battles through the Pacific and isolated areas where a major impact is suspected to occur. This has created a plan for field research that will allow a research mission to focus their efforts in areas with greatest impact.

SafeGround has invested a modest budget into finding out how much impact there really is in three very different areas that World War 2 fought through. The field mission is looking at the impact in the Solomon Islands, Papua New Guinea and Palau. These three locations have very different stories in what happened and what is being done.

The push back began with the Americans landing on Guadalcanal in Aug 1942 and the push back of the Imperial Japanese Army began. Now the Solomon Islands have large areas of bomb affected areas and this impacts physical safety, pollution and land use. The good news is that the Royal Solomon Island Police Force has a small but well trained EOD (Explosive Ordnance Disposal) team that can deal with any munitions found. The bad news is their operational budget is small and the tyranny of distance between the islands makes deployment of the team to remote islands difficult and expensive.

Once the Japanese Army had been cleared from the Solomon Islands the war followed the islands north onto Bougainville Island and Papua New Guinea. The regional Japanese Headquarters was in Rabaul on New Britain Island and it became an imperative for the American forces to neutralise this area. They landed at Cape Gloucester on the western tip of New Britain in December 1943. The fighting spread across the northern coast for the rest of the war. This did achieve the objective of neutralising Rabaul although the city was never conquered.

Little has been done in the clearance of bombs from this area. There have been a number of foreign military training exercises in the area which have achieved some results but in large not much has taken place. This can be considered the land that history forgot.



A deminer from Cleared Ground Demining removes a variety of UXO from a cave in Peleliu, Palau



An American aircraft bomb is removed from a lagoon that is a popular site for scuba tourism.

The Republic of Palau was the next stop for war. The US Marine Corp landed on the island of Peleliu in Palau in September 1944. This invasion was thought to be an easy victory for America but fierce Japanese defence of the island cost the lives of 2336 Americans and 10695 Japanese soldiers and raged for two months. A final small group of 35 Japanese combatants did not surrender to the Americans until April 1947 almost two years since the war ended.

Much of the strategy of the US Military was to gain airfields so as to bypass many a fight. The Japanese soldiers left behind were left to 'wither on the vine' as their ability to be resupplied by headquarters ended.

Palau has been an active participant in many an international forum and have signed and ratified both the Mine Ban Treaty (MBT) and Convention on Cluster Munitions (CCM). This international diplomatic engagement has created opportunities to meet and engage with potential donors and NGO's and as a result budgets are spent in their country and three NGO's are present working there in bomb clearance.

SafeGround is undertaking a detailed field research mission that will study the very differing effects of leftover bombs in these three countries. The aim is to produce a book that is based on first hand field research and release this at the international treaty/disarmament forums. Simply put, the study is intended to be the conversation starter between countries that have a problem and countries that can be potential donors to remove these dangers.

Field research has already been undertaken in the Solomon Islands and Palau. A research mission will be undertaken in Papua New Guinea in early 2018.

Ancient history from World War 2 is still very real to communities who must live with these dangerous legacies. SafeGround hopes to facilitate with facts the conversation between countries affected by bombs and those that can help remove them. Only then can World War 2 drift into the pages of a history book where it no longer can kill or maim an innocent 73 years after the guns have fallen silent.

*John Rodsted
SafeGround*