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## *Aftermath of a Cyclone, and a Petrified Gecko*

Karyn Gladwish and I visited Tonga in April this year. We had heard about the cyclone but were not really prepared for the sight of the devastation it had wreaked very selectively on the Department of Justice buildings.

The staff told how they had battled wind and torrential rain at midnight, to drag papers, files and some books from the Chief Justice's Chambers to push them into the new library, which was, very fortunately, untouched. Drawers from the CJ's big desk were piled in a corner. The desk itself had been upended during the height of the storm, to prop up one of the walls of the chambers, which was threatening to fall on the library!

When Karyn and I arrived the following month, the Chief Justice was using the library as his chambers. A sign hung outside saying 'Chambers. No Admittance'. When the court was in session the sign was reversed to read 'Court in Session. No Admittance'

It must be realised that the library room is a small one, full of bookshelves and containing the computer. There is one wooden table with four chairs. The CJ and all involved in the hearing sit around this table. When the Court is not in session, the CJ remains at this table, and attends to his work, with his telephone stuck between the reference books on the adjacent shelf, and his fax machine on the chair beside him. I think it would be impossible to imagine a judge anywhere in Australia and New Zealand working under these conditions.

During the week we were there the wreckage was being cleared; only the floor platforms and a couple of walls were left. The roof of the Supreme Court/ Parliament House was covered in sheets of blue plastic. The Tongan Department of Justice had asked Australia and New Zealand for urgent assistance, and everyone was hopeful that some relief would be provided soon.

Karyn and I were able to work in the library because, very fortunately, the court was away on circuit in Vala'u - Tonga's northern group of islands. We completed cataloguing all the texts, and updated the holdings list of all materials in the library.

Karyn then examined the computer - Butterworths' gift to Tonga two years ago. It had apparently not worked since the cyclone. After a few attempts to turn it on Karyn called in "the man from PATCO" - the only "technician" available. The trouble seemed to be in the UPS (uninterrupted power supply) box. The PATCO man boldly unscrewed and opened it out. He then produced a long-nosed pair of tweezers and very delicately pulled out - a black and frizzled gecko! The creature had obviously squeezed in (we don't know how) seeking shelter in the storm only to meet a quick death. Thus this story has a happy ending - the computer is working well, though it only has one key now, the other from the CJ's desk being lost.

We left the country amazed at the resilience of Pacific Islanders. Two years ago a fire destroyed their library, and they worked to have it rebuilt and restocked. They are now very philosophically facing the daunting task of rebuilding all of their court infrastructure. One cannot help but admire them all.

**Lorraine Weinman**

## *Help for Tonga from New Zealand and Australia*

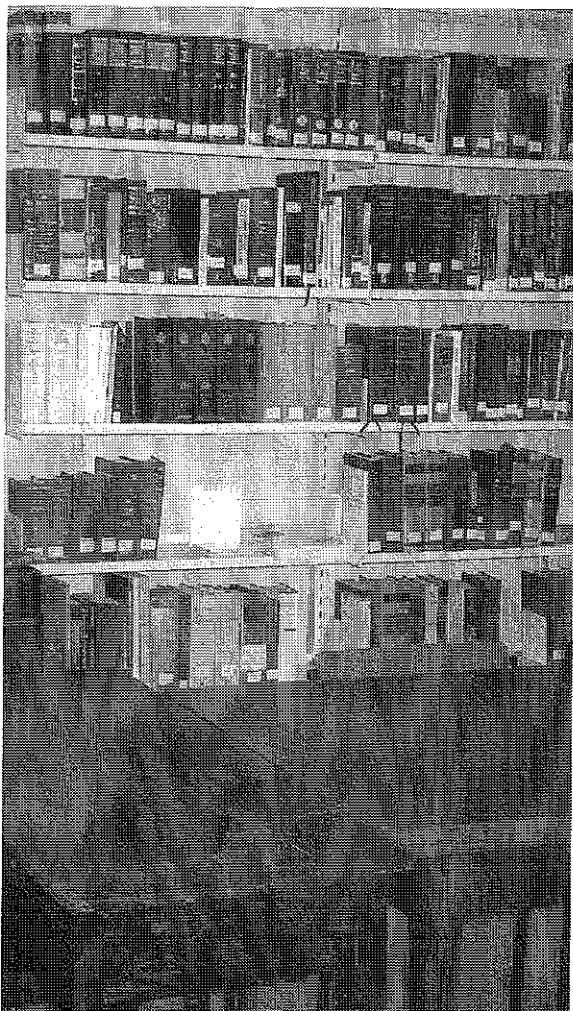
When Cyclone Hina hit Tonga on 16 March this year, demolishing the Chief Justice's Chambers and the Supreme Court Registry, and severely damaging the Supreme Court itself, it seemed like a blow from which the country would not recover for years.

However, five months later, the new Chief Justice - Jack Lewis from South Australia - has new Chambers, and a new court room, "whipped up", as he says, "by New Zealand in double quick time". He has nothing but praise for the speed with which the New Zealand Government moved to help.

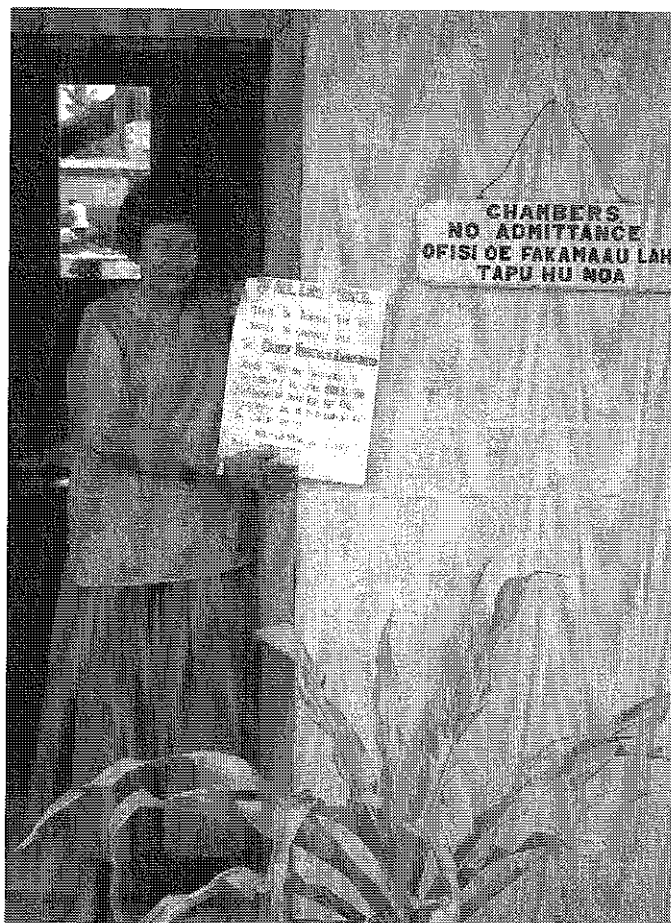
Australia too, through AusAID is working to deliver an impressive package of buildings and equipment. The Chief Justice listed these - a new administrative/registry block, four new computers and training for staff, and replacement of all equipment lost in the cyclone.

The previous Chief Justice, Nigel Hampton, has completed his contract and returned to Christchurch. The present CJ, Jack Lewis, was formerly the Puisne Judge. Both judges worked strongly after the cyclone to bring the plight of the Tongan courts and the judiciary to the attention of international agencies.

**Lorraine Weinman**



*The court sits at these two small tables in between the bookshelves. It is a snug fit for just four or five people.*



*The library is well used as the Chief Justice's chambers, and has served as the court house as well. The hand-written notices warn practitioners they can only use the library in exceptional circumstances.*