



**Australian Government**  
**Department of Health and Ageing**

CHIEF MEDICAL OFFICER

**Public health approach for tuberculosis (TB) in Papua New Guinea's Western Province**

The World Health Organization's strategy for TB control, directly observed treatment, short-course (or DOTS), advocates that the most effective way of treating TB is on a community-wide basis.

DOTS aims to achieve a high level of treatment compliance across the community. This is important because interruptions to TB treatment and access to medicines, or using non-standard regimens, can lead to the development of resistance to TB drugs.

In October 2011, at the request of the Government of PNG, the World Health Organization (WHO) undertook an assessment of the work being done to improve TB services in Western Province. I understand the WHO supported the approach being taken in Western Province and will review the situation again in late November 2012.

The approach being taken in Western Province will not only improve outcomes for the communities in Daru and South Fly by enabling them to access the health care they need at home, it will also better manage risks to Torres Strait communities.

Australia has one of the lowest rates of TB in the world, maintaining a rate of less than 6 cases per 100,000 population since 1986. Queensland has one of the lowest rates of TB in Australia, reporting an incidence rate of 4.9 cases per 100,000 population in 2011.

The Department of Health and Ageing, through the Torres Strait Cross Border Health Issues Committee, will continue to work with Queensland Health, Australian Government agencies, including AusAID, and PNG health authorities to identify and monitor health issues, including TB, arising in the Torres Strait and along PNG's South Fly coast.

**Professor Chris Baggoley**  
*BVSc (Hons), BM BS, BSocAdmin, FACEM*

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