



Australian High Commission
Solomon Islands

MEDIA RELEASE

CURTIN UNIVERSITY STUDENTS DIGITISE SOLOMON ISLANDS GEOLOGICAL HERITAGE

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Twenty New Colombo Plan Scholars from Curtin University have digitised more than 7,000 rock samples from across Solomon Islands, preserving a nationally significant geological collection and unlocking valuable geological data to support the country's future research and economic development.

During a four-week mobility program, the students worked in five teams to catalogue this unique collection of rock samples from the former Geological Survey rock shed, documenting an estimated 3.5 to 4 tonnes of material collected from thousands of locations across Solomon Islands in the 1970's.

The students also digitised geological maps and historical rock sample location records from the Geological Survey archives, achieving digital coverage of 99 per cent of the country and identifying the locations of 13,000 samples retained for future research.

This work has transformed an invaluable national asset into an accessible digital resource. For the first time, decades of geological information can be easily accessed and used by government agencies, researchers, educators, industry and development partners. The collection will help strengthen geological research, support evidence-based resource management and planning, and provide a rich learning resource for the next generation of Solomon Islands geologists, scientists and students.

The digitised collection is now available through the Solomon Islands Ministry of Mines and Rural Electrification's online repository, ensuring that this important geological heritage is preserved and accessible for generations to come. The data is also expected to contribute to a forthcoming publication in Nature Scientific Data, further enhancing the international visibility and scientific value of Solomon Islands geological research.

The project demonstrates the power of international education partnerships to deliver practical benefits for national development while advancing scientific knowledge. By preserving and modernising a unique geological archive, the initiative provides Solomon Islands with tools and information that will continue to generate value long after the project has concluded.

Beyond its scientific contributions, the program provided students with hands-on experience in research, leadership, teamwork and cross-cultural collaboration. Working alongside Ministry staff, students developed a deeper understanding of Solomon Islands while building lasting professional and personal connections with local colleagues, communities and institutions.

The project forms part of Australia's New Colombo Plan, a flagship initiative that strengthens knowledge, understanding and people-to-people links across the Indo-Pacific through study, internship and mobility opportunities. Through experiences such as this, the New Colombo Plan is helping to build enduring partnerships between Australia and Solomon Islands, creating lifelong professional networks and friendships that will underpin cooperation between our countries for decades to come.

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PHOTOS:



Caption 1: Group photo of Curtin University scholars and AHC staff, following presentation of research outcomes.



Caption 2: Curtin students digitising 7,000 geological maps and 7,000 rock samples.