



EDUCATIONAL RESOURCE CENTRES, BOUGAINVILLE ISLAND **Crossing the Digital Divide for All**

Clusters of schools located in five or six remote geographical sites on Bougainville will soon be able to use Educational Resource Centres (ERC) funded by Marist Solidarity in partnership with the Marist Fathers' Development Agency (MMC) and AusAID.

These ERCs will have some simple computers, scanners, laser printers and a battery back-up power supply. There will also be an Operations Manager and a Maintenance Program to support the Centre.

The concept of an ERC arose out of the Bougainville Educational Leadership Program (BELP), a MAPS project supported by Marist Students, which has operated for the last three years with funding from Marist School students in Australia. Head Teachers participating in those workshops expressed the need to have access to similar simple equipment (laptop, printer etc) that we used while conducting the workshops. They wish to '*Cross the Digital Divide*' and operate functionally in the educational, administrative and commercial world that they see 'out there'.

The MAPS plan for these ERCs is to install systems made up of PC rebuilds and new peripherals in rooms supplied by the local community which have generator supplied power for part of the day. There will be a battery and inverter back up facility as well.

An Operations Manager will charge an affordable 'fee for service' to sustain the project. There will be workshops to establish the project (computer building and diagnostics, software management and administrative practices) and regular visits from the Project Technical Officer who is an ex-Bougainville Revolutionary Army (BRA) communications officer who has managed to connect his ultra-remote village of Paruparu in the 'no-go zone' to email via HF Radio.

Our Marist Campaign funds of \$15,000 is 'value added' by MMC/AusAID funds making a \$60,000 project for the establishment of five or six ERCs.



Linus Sia who will act as Technical Officer for the Project