

Santa visits patients

YOUTHS from the Yaramanda Gutnius Lutheran Church brought some Christmas cheer to patients at the Wapenamanda Hospital, in Enga.

The Sukutea Youth Group, from Wapenamanda district, made the surprise visit and put smiles on patient's faces.

Their smiles grew as the group's special guest, Santa Claus, entered the room.

Group spokesman Eki Korimbao said they presented gifts and food to the patients.

Korimbao said the visit was a nice distraction for the patients who were thinking of their families and friends back home and what they were doing for Christmas.

"We wanted to show the patients that they are still part of the broader community and they shouldn't feel left out," he said.

"They must celebrate with everyone else."

He said it was the first time Santa Claus had visited the hospital.

Korimbao said the contribution made for the food and presents were from the youths.

Right: Santa Claus and his helpers from the Yaramanda Gutnius Lutheran Church youths visiting patients at the Wapenamanda Hospital.



Warning over mining giant

AS the debate on whether to reopen the controversial Panguna copper mine in Bougainville intensifies, communities must be aware that mining operator Rio Tinto's bad behaviour is not a thing of the past, an international union official has warned.

General secretary of IndustriALL Global Union Jyrki Raina said the environmental devastation caused by the Panguna mine had been one of the key grievances by local communities against Bougainville Copper Limited (BCL), the mining company majority-owned by Rio Tinto.

"Far from cleaning up its act, Rio

Tinto stands accused of ongoing environmental damage, health and safety violations and clashes with indigenous groups," Raina said.

"For example, nomads living in Mongolia's Gobi Desert say their wells have dried up after their scarce source of underground water has been diverted by Rio Tinto's vast Oyu Tolgoi gold and copper mine in the country. The company had promised to keep the herders' precious water source untouched.

"Last December, Rio Tinto's Ranger uranium mine in Australia's Kakadu National Park leaked 1.4

million litres of radioactive slurry. It followed a similar leak just a week earlier at a Rio Tinto uranium mine in Namibia. According to an independent expert report on the leak at Ranger, corporate governance and management of process safety did not meet expected standards at the time of the leak.

"Rio Tinto's track record on the environment is no better in Indonesia. Take the Grasberg mine where Rio Tinto has invested over a billion dollars. Norway's state-owned pension fund sold its entire US \$850 million (K2,190,693,249) stake in

Rio Tinto in 2008 because Grasberg discharges huge amounts of tailings (the often contaminated by-product of mining extraction) directly into a natural river system," Raina said.

"The mining giant fails to protect its workers. Last year, 40 people were killed at the company's fully or partially-owned operations. Miners at Grasberg recently threatened a month-long strike after their demands that management be held responsible for the deaths of five workers in September went unheeded.

"Rio Tinto, which has a market value of US\$90 billion (K232bn), is

increasingly turning to contract and subcontracted workers to cut costs. At its Madagascar Minerals operation there were double the numbers of contract workers as permanent staff at the end of early 2014. In Australia, Rio Tinto has sacked fulltime workers on mass but kept on casual or contract workers at the Hail Creek mine in Queensland.

"It is this kind of corporate bad behaviour that has led IndustriALL Global Union, which represents 50 million workers in over 140 countries, to run an on-going campaign against Rio Tinto to demand it live up to its claim of being a sustainable company."