

# Heartbreak and disbelief as volcano victims named

● Seismologists have predicted there is a 50 percent chance of another eruption on New Zealand's White Island

Sydney

The families and friends of Australian victims of the White Island volcano tragedy paid tribute to "wonderful" lost loved ones Wednesday and expressed doubt they were made aware of the risks of visiting the island.

Seven of the nine people so far identified and named as missing by New Zealand police are from Australia.

An eighth Australian victim who died in hospital was named by authorities there late Wednesday.

That number is expected to rise.

Many more of the victims are expected to have been day-trippers from a cruise ship that left from Sydney.

As the human toll from Monday's eruption came into sharper focus, the families of four of those Australian victims -- who are presumed dead -- spoke out.

"Gavin was a wonderful son and brother," father Brian Dallow told media, saying it would have a "big impact" on the family, especially at Christmastime. "We're really going to miss him."

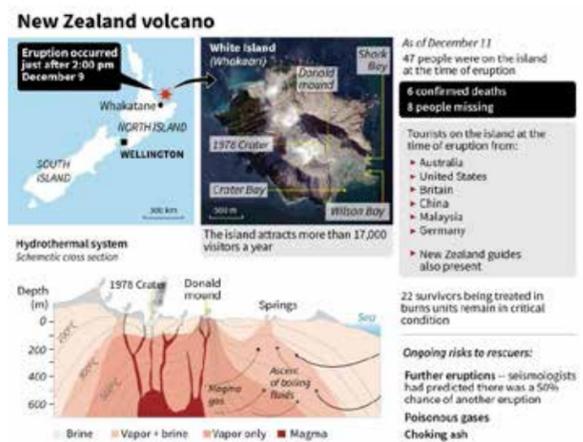
"We'll miss him at the cricket -- I will, at least, and we'll miss him at the football."

"He was a generous man, always helping his family and his community."

Gavin Dallow was believed killed along with his 15-year-old stepdaughter Zoe Hosking.



The smoldering White Island volcano off the coast of New Zealand's North Island



"Our hearts break at the loss of Zoe at such a young age. We know her loss will also devastate her school community and the local Girl Guides of which she was an active member," her step grandfather said.

Her mother, Lisa Hosking, is among those being treated for severe burns.

Brian Dallow said he did not believe his son would have visited the island if he was aware of the risk.

"I think if he knew there was a

danger, he would haven't gone on it. So I'm pretty sure they weren't fully informed of the dangers, otherwise he would haven't gone. I'm quite sure of that. That's the only thing I can be really positive about."

Brisbane woman Julie Richards and her 20-year-old daughter Jessica were also presumed dead.

Family friend John Mickel said news of their deaths was "devastating".

"New Zealand police earlier

this morning confirmed that both Julie and Jess are amongst the deceased in this tragic incident in New Zealand," he told reporters in Brisbane.

Mickel described the pair as "adventurous" and lovers of outdoor sports, saying Jessica was a university student and promising Australian Rules player.

"The family, of course, are united in grief."

Six friends who had been travelling with three other Australians who died -- Jason Griffiths, and couple Karla Mathews and Richard Elzer -- released a joint statement via the country's foreign affairs department late Wednesday.

The group said they had spent five "wonderful" days together on a cruise before they were "devastated" by the news the trio had been on the island when it erupted and Mathews and Elzer had not made it off.

"We then located our third friend, Jason Griffiths, in a hospital in the early hours of the next morning," they said.

"From that moment until the moment of his passing, Jason was surrounded by friends and family members.

"We are incredibly saddened to have lost three of our closest friends."

Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison said his government had "activated a repatriation plan to bring a number of Australians injured in the White Island volcano tragedy from New Zealand to Australia for specialist medical care."

Up to 10 injured patients will be transferred, beginning in the next 24 hours.

"Three Royal Australian Air Force aircraft have been deployed to New Zealand as part of the repatriation effort."

## Bougainville voters back independence by landslide



Young Upe men cast their votes in the Bougainville Referendum at the men's only polling station in Teau Bougainville, Papua New Guinea.

● Chairman of the Bougainville Referendum Commission has declared some 98 percent of voters on the Melanesian archipelago backed independence



Buka | Papua New Guinea

Voters backing Bougainville's independence from Papua New Guinea have won a landslide referendum victory, according to results released yesterday -- a major step toward the troubled isles becoming the world's newest nation.

Chairman of the Bougainville Referendum Commission Bertie Ahern declared 176,928 people -- around 98 percent of voters -- had backed independence with just 3,043 supporting the option of remaining part of Papua New Guinea with more autonomy.

The announcement prompted loud cheers, applause and tears as dignitaries soon burst

into song, with strains of the islands' anthem "My Bougainville" ringing out.

"Happy is an understatement" nursing graduate Alexia Baria told AFP, "you see my tears, this is the moment we have been waiting for."

The historic vote caps a decades-long peace process and a long recovery from a brutal civil war between Bougainville rebels, Papua New Guinea security forces and foreign mercenaries that ended in 1998 and left up to 20,000 people dead -- 10 percent of the population.

"Now, at least psychologically, we feel liberated," said John Momis, the priest-turned-leader of the autonomous region's government.

But independence will not be immediate, a long political process lies ahead and leaders face formidable financial and administrative challenges to turn a cluster of poor Pacific islands into a fully-fledged nation.

The result must first be ratified by Papua New Guinea's parliament -- where there is opposition to the move for fear it may spark other independence movements in a nation defined by disparate linguistic and tribal groups. But the scale of the victory for the pro-independence side will heap pressure on Port Moresby to endorse the outcome.

# First commercial electric plane takes flight in Canada

Vancouver

The world's first fully electric commercial aircraft took its inaugural test flight on Tuesday, taking off from the Canadian city of Vancouver and offering hope that airlines may one day end their polluting emissions.

"This proves that commercial aviation in all-electric form can work," said Roei Ganzarski, chief executive of Seattle-based engineering firm magniX.

The company designed the plane's motor and worked in partnership with Harbour Air, which ferries half a million passengers a year between Vancouver, Whistler ski resort and nearby islands and coastal communities.

Ganzarski said the technology would mean significant cost savings for airlines -- not to mention zero emissions.

"This signifies the start of the electric aviation age," he told reporters.

Civil aviation is one of the fastest growing sources of carbon emissions as people increasingly take to the skies and new technologies have been slow to get off the ground.

The e-plane -- a 62-year-old,



Harbour Air Pilot and CEO Greg McDougall flies the world's first all-electric, zero-emission commercial aircraft during a test flight in a de Havilland DHC-2 Beaver from Vancouver International Airport's South Terminal

six-passenger DHC-2 de Havilland Beaver seaplane retrofitted with an electric motor -- was piloted by Greg McDougall,

founder and chief executive of Harbour Air. "For me that flight was just like flying a Beaver, but it was a

Beaver on electric steroids. I actually had to back off on the power," he said.



At 285 grammes of CO2 emitted per kilometre (mile) travelled by each passenger, airline industry emissions far exceed those from all other modes of transport, according to the European Environment Agency. The emissions contribute to global warming and climate change, which scientists say will unleash harsher droughts, superstorms, and sea-level rise.

McDougall took the plane on a short loop along the Fraser River near Vancouver International Airport in front of around 100 onlookers soon after sunrise.

**Environmentally-friendly flying**

The flight lasted less than 15 minutes, according to an AFP journalist on the scene.

"Our goal is to actually electrify the entire fleet. There's no reason not to," said McDougall.

On top of fuel efficiency, the company would save millions in maintenance costs, as electric motors require "drastically" less upkeep, McDougall said.

However, Harbour Air will have to wait at least two years before it can begin electrifying its fleet of more than 40 seaplanes.

The e-plane has to be tested further to confirm it is reliable and safe. In addition, the electric

motor must be approved and certified by regulators.

In Ottawa, Transport Minister Marc Garneau told reporters ahead of the maiden flight that he had his "fingers crossed that the electric plane will work well."

If it does, he said, "it could set a trend for more environmentally friendly flying."

Battery power is also a challenge. An aircraft like the one flown on Tuesday could only fly about 100 miles (160 kilometers) on lithium battery power, said Ganzarski.

While that's not far, it's sufficient for the majority of short-haul flights run by Harbour Air. "The range now is not where we'd love it to be, but it's enough to start the revolution," said Ganzarski, who predicts batteries and electric motors will eventually be developed to power longer flights.

While the world waits, he said cheaper short-haul flights powered by electricity could transform the way people connect and where they work.

"If people are willing to drive an hour to work, why not fly 15 minutes to work?" he said.