



Australian High Commission  
Vanuatu



4 June 2018

## Media Release

### Historic Diplomatic Corps visit to Pentecost

On 1-2 June, the Australian and New Zealand High Commissioners, Jenny Da Rin and Jonathan Schwass, and the French Ambassador, Gilles Favret, made a historic visit to Pentecost. It was the first official visit by the heads of missions to Pentecost and also the first ever joint goodwill visit by the diplomatic corps.



*Australian and New Zealand High Commissioners, Jenny Da Rin and Jonathan Schwass, with French Ambassador Gilles Favret and local chiefs stand before Father Walter Lini's memorial.*

“We travelled to Pentecost to gain a greater appreciation for the history and culture of Vanuatu. Pentecost was the home of the father of Independence, Father Walter Lini, and has given Vanuatu some of its iconic cultural icons such as sand drawing and the Nagol (land diving),” said the heads of missions.

“It was a privilege to meet Prime Minister Salwai and Parliamentary Secretary Silas Bule on Pentecost and hear directly from them and their communities about Pentecost’s past, its rich culture and its future ambitions,” they continued.



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The heads of missions commenced their visit at the Lini Memorial College (LMC) to pay their respects at the tomb of Father Walter Lini. In a moving ceremony, the heads of missions, together with LMC students, laid a wreath in his memory and observed a minute's silence.

The delegation travelled from north to south Pentecost, visiting schools and meeting communities along the way. They experienced the kastom and culture of Pentecost, heard about its history and discussed its development aspirations.

The heads of missions were warmly welcomed by Prime Minister Charlot Salwai and Parliamentary Secretary Silas Bule in Melsisi, where they met community leaders, visited the largest church in Vanuatu and inspected the health dispensary.



*The delegation meet the Prime Minister, Charlot Salwai, at Melsisi, Pentecost*

While in Pentecost, the delegation was treated to demonstrations of sand drawing, traditional food and the world-renowned Nagol (land diving), and they joined in local ceremonies and dancing.

The visit was very successful, with the heads of missions strengthening the bonds of friendship and leaving with a greater understanding of Pentecost, its history, culture and its people.



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Diplomatic Corps goodwill visits are an increasingly common practice globally and present a valuable opportunity for diplomatic missions to deepen their understanding of the country and its culture, and engage with communities.

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