



Australian High Commission

Vanuatu

12 May 2020

## JOINT MEDIA RELEASE

### **Australia confirms VUV1.7 billion for Vanuatu to respond to COVID-19 and TC Harold**

The Prime Minister of Vanuatu Honourable Bob Loughman Weibor met with Australia's High Commissioner to Vanuatu, Her Excellency Sarah deZoeten, to discuss the strong bilateral partnership between Australia and Vanuatu and the importance of the friendship as Vanuatu celebrates its 40th anniversary of independence.

"Australia and Vanuatu have been friends for a long time and we want to continue the relationship in the best interests of our people", said Prime Minister Loughman. "As a young nation we have learned from Australia".

"Australia and Vanuatu share a close and longstanding friendship that spans forty years of diplomatic relations. It is enhanced by our people to people links and underwritten by our shared values and desire for a prosperous and secure region" said Australia's High Commissioner to Vanuatu, H.E. Sarah deZoeten.

Prime Minister Loughman and the High Commissioner discussed the priorities of the Vanuatu Government and how to further enhance the partnership between Vanuatu and Australia as they work together in response to the concurrent crises of Tropical Cyclone Harold and COVID-19.

Australia's High Commissioner to Vanuatu, reaffirmed that Australia stands with its friend and partner in the face of these crises.

Australia has pledged more than 1.7 billion vatu to support Vanuatu's response to COVID-19 and Tropical Cyclone Harold.

This includes over 1 billion vatu in assistance to ensure Vanuatu can respond to the economic and health security impacts of COVID-19. This package of support includes budget support for economic stimulus and essential medical equipment and supplies.

"I would like to convey the appreciation of the Government and the people of Vanuatu for Australia's assistance in relation to COVID and Tropical Cyclone Harold" said Prime Minister Loughman. The Prime Minister noted that COVID was a regional challenge. "Vanuatu will be free when Australia and the region are free. It is important that we move forward together", he said.



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In response to the devastation of Tropical Cyclone Harold, Australia is providing more than 600 million vatu in assistance. This includes humanitarian relief supplies such as blankets, lanterns, shelter kits and hygiene kits, support for the Government of Vanuatu in areas including health, education and policing and support to international and local NGOs and the Vanuatu Red Cross. Over 95 tonnes of humanitarian supplies have been flown to Vanuatu on Royal Australian Air Force C-17 flights.

Australian High Commissioner to Vanuatu, Sarah deZoeten, said: “Australians were so touched by the response of the Government and people of Vanuatu during the bush fires in Australia. As partners and friends, when the people of Vanuatu face challenges Australia wants to be there to help them too. That’s why we were pleased to respond to the Vanuatu Government’s request to provide assistance following Tropical Cyclone Harold.”



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*Prime Minister the Honourable Bob Loughman Weibor and Australia's High Commissioner to Vanuatu, H.E. Sarah deZoeten discuss the Australia-Vanuatu partnership*

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#### **Media contacts**

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