



Australian High Commission
Vanuatu

23 March 2022

JOINT MEDIA RELEASE

COVID-19 vaccines and medical equipment arrive in Vanuatu on Australian Defence Force aircraft

In response to a Government of Vanuatu request, an Australian Defence Force (ADF) C-130J Hercules aircraft delivered COVID-19 supplies to Vanuatu on 23 March.

The supplies include 20,000 additional AstraZeneca vaccines and specialised medical equipment, all delivered to the Ministry of Health as part of Australia's ongoing support to Vanuatu's COVID-19 response.



COVID-19 supplies are unloaded from the ADF C-130J aircraft on the tarmac at Bauerfield International Airport Port Vila

An Australian Medical Assistance Team (AUSMAT) also arrived in Vanuatu on 23 March and will work together with Vanuatu health authorities to help manage the health impacts of COVID-19.

Director General of Vanuatu's Ministry of Health Russel Tamata acknowledged the generous support of Vanuatu's partners since the beginning of the pandemic.

"This batch of AstraZeneca vaccines from Australia will enable the Government to meet its vaccination coverage targets in all provinces," said Director General Tamata.



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The arrival of 20,000 AstraZeneca doses brings the total number of Australian COVID-19 vaccines shared with Vanuatu to 160,000 since Vanuatu commenced its COVID-19 vaccination campaign in June 2021.

The cargo also included a 2.5 tonne bundle of specialised medical equipment known as a ‘brick’. The brick contains specific medical equipment required to treat and manage COVID-19 patients including Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), oxygen equipment, rapid antigen tests and medicines.

Director General Tamata said the much-needed PPE would allow Vanuatu’s health and frontline workers to continue to operate safely.

“We thank the Government and the people of Australia for all this support,” said Director General Tamata.



Australian High Commission and Government of Vanuatu staff unload the COVID-19 supplies and vaccines

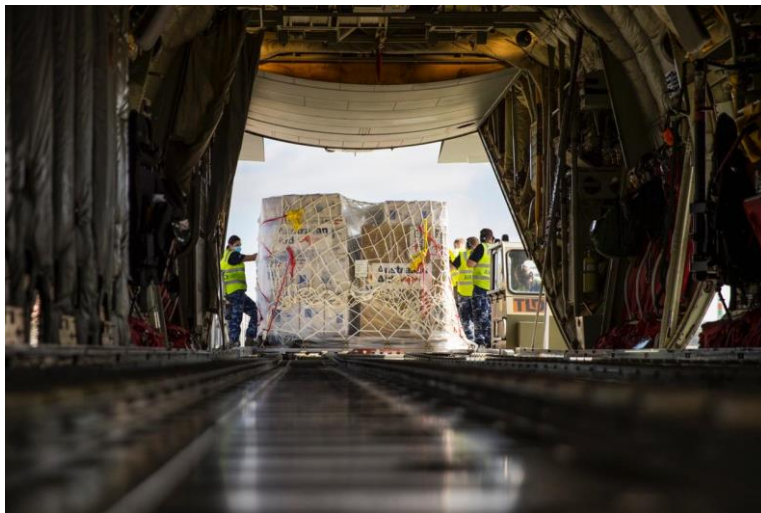


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A spokesperson for the Australian High Commission in Vanuatu acknowledged Australia's longstanding health partnership with Vanuatu, and the close coordination between officials from both countries to enable this support.

“Australia stands shoulder to shoulder with Vanuatu as it faces this COVID-19 outbreak. We are working closely with the Government of Vanuatu to provide support where it is most needed.

“We are Pacific family and the health and safety of all of our colleagues, families and friends is our number one priority. The delivery of support equipment was contactless and in strict compliance with Vanuatu and Australian COVID-19 protocols,” said the spokesperson.



Australian Defence Force personnel loading the COVID-19 supplies in Australia.

The supplies will support the COVID-19 response across the country. Newly arrived vaccines and PPE will be distributed to all provinces of Vanuatu.

The ADF aircraft also delivered equipment and stores to support the delivery of the Vanuatu Government National Emergency Radio Network, a joint Vanuatu-Australia initiative to upgrade Vanuatu's inter-island emergency radio network.

The network, operated by the Vanuatu Police Force (VPF) with ADF advisory support, is helping the delivery of essential services and VPF COVID-19 operations across the archipelago. Since the declaration of the global pandemic in March 2020, Vanuatu has worked with international partners, civil society and communities to support COVID-19 preparedness in Vanuatu.

Prior to the recent outbreak, through the Australian-funded Vanuatu Health Program, medical equipment was prepositioned in every health centre and dispensary in Vanuatu.



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Shortly after COVID-19 community transmission was confirmed by authorities in Vanuatu, Australia provided 10,000 vaccines, 13,000 Rapid Antigen Tests, 60 oxygen concentrators, and PPE to the Ministry of Health.

Australia is also responding to requests from Vanuatu for surge support for priority positions in Vanuatu's health sector. Since the outbreak, Australia has urgently mobilised a number of advisers and medical personnel including a doctor to support curative and hospital services, an infection prevention and control specialist and a health security advisor.

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