



**Australian High Commissioner**

**Vanuatu**

**Farewell of HMAS *Canberra***

**Monday 27 March 2023**

- Gud moning long yumi everiwan. Hemi wan plesa blong stap wetem yufala onboard HMAS Canberra.
- Mi wantem tekem opotuniti ia blo aknolejmen ol Chiefs mo traditional owna blong land mo wota we yumi mit today.
- Mi wantem aknolejem tu:
  - Honourable Prime Minister, Honourable Deputy Prime Minister mo ol membas blong Council of Ministers
  - High Komisina blong Niu Silan, Ambassador blong Franis
  - Ol Daarekta Jenerols
  - Komisena blong Polis
  - Komanding Ofisa Captan Jace Hutchinson – tangkyu tumas blong welkam mifala long ship today - mo Colonel Doug Pashley
- I would like to begin by thanking all those ADF women and men around us today.
  - They dropped what they were doing in Australia to come to Vanuatu, with the first Royal Australian Air Force flight arriving in Vanuatu less than twelve hours after the devastating Tropical Cyclones Judy and Kevin
  - And HMAS Canberra departed for Vanuatu the day after Tropical Kevin passed



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- I extend my sympathies to the people of Vanuatu for these terrible disasters.
- Today we come together to farewell HMAS Canberra and its embarked forces.
- These men and women responded to a request from the Vanuatu Government for assistance and have worked hand-in-glove with the National Disaster Management Office, Vanuatu Police Force and FRANZ partners to deliver lifesaving assistance.
- The ability to response quickly and effectively to each other's needs is a key element of our partnership, and testament to its strength.
- Across air, land and sea, our assistance has reached some of the most remote parts of SHEFA and TAFEA provinces.
- Since arriving the Australian Defence Force completed 41 helicopter flights and delivered over 100 tonnes of humanitarian relief to areas where they were needed most
- 400 personnel including Government officials, medical workers and provincial staff were transported to support response priorities.
- Four medivacs were also conducted, to get people in remote areas the urgent medical care they required.
- Our ADF engineer teams worked closely with the Vanuatu Mobile Force to do repairs at Vila Central Hospital and schools across Efate
- Repairs of eight classrooms at four schools enabled 320 children to return to school; and



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- Vila Central Hospital is using its full capacity of beds – thank you, Minister of Health for accompanying me to see this work underway.
- This weekend, the Prime Minister and I were privileged to visit some of the most remote parts of the country – specifically Aneityum and Futuna.
- we saw firsthand the progress our ADF made in repairing the Futuna police station, medical centre and church. They had also cut a new path so children could return safely back to school.
- the visits were also an opportunity to deliver six tonnes of much needed Government of Vanuatu food relief – highlighting to me the importance and interoperability of our partnership.
- Australia has been proud to be part of the highly effective Vanuatu Government-led response effort
- strong coordination under NDMO has worked so well, and I want to thank the FRANZ partnership – under New Zealand’s chairmanship – for assisting us to remain well coordinated, and now hand over to the United Nations.
- As Vanuatu transitions from response to recovery, this is a natural point for HMAS Canberra to return to Australia.
- a team of 62 ADF engineers will remain in Vanuatu for another week to conclude works at damaged schools and health facilities.
- And we will continue to stand by Vanuatu in its recovery.
- We are making sure our existing programs are well aligned to the Vanuatu Government’s disaster response. For example,



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- Our Vanuatu Health Program is supporting the Ministry of Health in sending Emergency Medical Teams to Tafea; and
- The Vanuatu Skills Partnership is providing communications and administrative support to the Tafea Provincial Emergency Operations Centre.
- We have also deployed additional recovery logistics and operations specialists to NDMO and
- Two new disaster response and recovery logistics and operations specialists will arrive in Vanuatu soon.
- The Australian Humanitarian Partnership will support local and international NGOs with operations in remote communities to support water supply, food security, psychological and shelter needs over the next 12 months.
- The frequency and intensity of these weather systems highlights the urgency of responding to the climate crisis, and I welcome the Prime Minister's global leadership to address this global problem of climate change.
- I would like to conclude by thanking the Prime Minister and your Government for hosting HMAS Canberra and its embarked forces and crew in your country, and making them a core part of your humanitarian response.
- Faftai.