



## Australian High Commissioner

### Vanuatu

#### **Morning Tea – Mal Meninga**

**Speech delivered by Australian High Commissioner to Vanuatu, H.E. Heidi Bootle  
AHC Nakamal 10 am – 11 am 18 April 2024**

- Tangkyu tumas long yufala evriwan blong save joenem mifala tudei blong serem morning tea ia wetem wan long ol legendary sportman blong yumi
  - Mal Meninga and your children; Zach, Eva and Elijah, it is an honour to have you visit us at the Australian High Commission
- Mi wantem acknowledgem ol tradisional ona blong graon we yumi mit long hem tudei
- Mi welkam tu CEO mo staff blong Vanuatu Tourism Office
  - Direkta blong Vanuatu Kaljoral Senta
  - Ol memba blong Vanuatu Police Force
  - FOX Sports film crew
  - ol official mo players of the Vanuatu Rugby League
  - mo team blong mifala long Australian High Commission.
- Tawir Enarawiangan (**TE WIR - ENA RA WIAN GAN**)
- In the language of Lowithal village on Tanna, welkam!
- Mal, Zach, Eva and Elijah – thank-you for sharing your time with us this morning.
- Thank you VTO for facilitating Mal’s visit to Vanuatu and especially to his home island of Tanna.
- Mal, I understand that this is your second trip to Vanuatu to reconnect with your family on Tanna.
  - Family is so important and I’m sure this has been a very special journey and an important part of your life.
  - It’s wonderful that you have been able to share that with your children.



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- When we talk about ‘Pacific family’, we mean our shared values and strong cultural ties
  - For Vanuatu and Australia, we see and celebrate this through our Melanesian linkages to Australian South Sea Islander and Torres Strait Islander peoples.
  
- But we also mean our friendships, and you may see a few more familiar faces here today
  - including our very own David Saul, who I understand you know through your connections with Vanuatu Rugby
  - Members of the Vanuatu Rugby League, including athletes who toured North Queensland this year ahead of the Mal Meninga Cup
  - And Paul who you met on Tanna
  
- You are now firmly a friend of the High Commission and welcome here any time.
  
- We hope that your days on Tanna were very rewarding for you, your children and your Tanna family.
  - We also hear you had the opportunity to enjoy some of the amazing things Tanna has to offer – the mighty Yasur Volcano, the Blue cave – and experience the Tanna custom.
  
- Vanuatu and Australia share a love of sport, and celebrate the role it plays in building communities and developing leaders
  - we thank you for being a role model and inspiration for young boys and girls in Australia, Vanuatu and our shared Pacific region over your long and successful career.
  
- Our Vanuatu-Australia sporting partnerships support talented athletes at all levels, including Vanuatu’s past, present and future Olympians – those aiming to compete at Paris2024
  - we also promote inclusivity by empowering women and girls to participate and excel in male-dominated sports



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- Last month, Australia and Vanuatu celebrated our strong partnership during our Australia Day Vanuatu Partnership function
  - we invited Hans Ahwang from Moa Island in the Torres Strait to join us – to perform alongside our Australian High Commission Choir and acknowledge our close cultural connections
  - while he was in Vanuatu, Hans also learned he is descended from Tanna
  - we were honoured to play a small part in his journey of reconnecting with his Tanna family.
  
- It is true that the bonds between our two countries stretch back over oceans and through time.
  
- Thank you again Mal, Zach, Eva, and Elijah for joining us today
  - We wish you all safe travels back home, and lukim yufala bakeken long Vanuatu ino longtaem
  
- **Tank yu tumas.**