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## JOINT MEDIA RELEASE

### **Australia and New Zealand support a new Hall of Justice for Vanuatu to celebrate 40 years of Independence**

Australia's High Commissioner to Vanuatu, H.E. Sarah deZoeten, and New Zealand's High Commissioner to Vanuatu, H.E. Jonathan Schwass, signed a Memorandum of Arrangement for the design and construction of a new Vanuatu Supreme Court building with Vanuatu Prime Minister, the Hon. Bob Loughman Weibur, on Monday 27 July 2020. Australia will provide Vt 240 million (AUD 3 million) and New Zealand will contribute Vt 227 million (NZD 3 million) to the project.

The two High Commissioners presented their countries' support for a new Hall of Justice as a gift from the people and governments of New Zealand and Australia to the people and government of Vanuatu to mark the anniversary of 40 years of Independence.

Since the iconic Vanuatu Supreme Court burned down in 2007, the Judges of the Supreme Court and Court of Appeal have been operating from temporary facilities. The new Hall of Justice, once completed, will be a fit-for-purpose building which reflects Melanesian style and is accessible to all citizens of Vanuatu.

"Through the past forty years, Australia and New Zealand have stood with Vanuatu as neighbours and as family, through good times and bad. This gift is a symbol of our shared belief in the rule of law and our long history of partnership in the justice sector. We are so pleased this gift will help support Vanuatu's effective administration of justice for all people" said High Commissioner deZoeten.

"Vanuatu has a deservedly high reputation through the Pacific and beyond for the strength and integrity of its legal system. New Zealand is honoured to be working with our Australian and ni-Vanuatu colleagues in the sector to ensure the Supreme Court has a home that befits its important role. It's all the more pleasing that we were able to support this project as a contribution to Vanuatu's 40th anniversary celebrations," said High Commissioner Schwass.

"Vanuatu is very delighted to successfully finalise a project that is co-funded by the Vanuatu Government its two major development partner countries which are Australia and New Zealand. I am happy that the partnership between our countries continues to bear its fruits and can support a very essential pillar of our democracy which is the judiciary", said Vanuatu Prime Minister, the honourable Bob Loughman Weibur.

He added that the by rebuilding the Hall of Justice is kind of giving back a face to the judiciary which is paramount to uphold law and order in our society.



The new Vanuatu Supreme Court building is being jointly funded by the Governments of Vanuatu, Australia and New Zealand. The design and construction of the building will be carried out in partnership between the three countries.

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