



Australian High Commission
Vanuatu

Joint Media Release

March 10, 2023

HMAS Canberra arrives in Vanuatu

The Government of Vanuatu has acknowledged the quick response by the Government of Australia to deploy Royal Australian Navy ship, HMAS Canberra, and the Royal Australian Air Force aircrafts to assist the response efforts after the devastation left by tropical cyclones Judy and Kevin.

“The swift response provided by the Government of Australia affirms our strong partnership and people to people connections,” said Prime Alatoi Ishmael Kalsakau Ma’aukoro.

“As a Family, we look out for each other and support one another in times of need. The generosity is profound.”

Prime Minister Kalsakau visited HMAS Canberra on 9 March, departing Port Vila airport on one of three Australian Army CH-47 Chinook helicopters that arrived on the vessel.

With other Government Ministers, Members of Parliament and officials and Australian High Commissioner to Vanuatu Heidi Bootle, the Prime Minister met the HMAS Canberra commanding officer to discuss Vanuatu's cyclone response priorities, as well as the crew preparing to respond.

“I am privileged to do a short visit and tour of HMAS Canberra and it is enlightening to witness the capabilities on board,” said Prime Minister Kalsakau.

“Air and sea capabilities to attend to HADR work is exceptional and it is a testament of an enduring and strong partnership moving forward.”



Prime Minister Kalsakau, Minister of Climate Change Adaptation Ralph Regenvanu, Trade Minister Matai Seremaiah, Health Minister Marco Mahe, Agricultural Minister Nakou Natuman, Minister of Justice John Still Qetu Tari, Leader of Government Business Charlot Salwai, 1st Deputy Speaker Chadrack Garcia, 4th Deputy Speaker Andrew Napuat and MP Job Andy Sam, Australian High Commissioner Bootle and Government of Vanuatu officials with Australian Defence Force personnel on the Port Vila Tarmac.

The initial distribution of non-food items has started and rapid assessments are underway in TAFEA and SHEFA provinces with assessment teams deployed on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday this week to Priority Area 1.

After reports from these rapid assessments are sent back to the National Emergency Operations Centre in Port Vila, the first pushouts of food rations will take place, which will be assisted by teams brought in by the HMAS Canberra.

The 230 metre-long Landing Helicopter Dock sailed from its homeport of Sydney, Australia and brings a versatile set of capabilities to support the response led by Vanuatu's National Disaster Management Office.

This includes three helicopters that will be deployed for priority tasks, including to support communication infrastructure needs. With Vanuatu Police Force counterparts, Australian Defence Force engineers will also assess any work that can be carried out at Vila Central Hospital.

Vanuatu's Minister of Climate Change Adaptation, Ralph Regenvanu, has welcomed the positive response from the Australian Government.

"The immediate response by the Government of Australia to the request of the Government of Vanuatu is a demonstration of the close and long-standing relations that Australia has with Vanuatu," Vanuatu's Minister of Climate Change Adaptation, Ralph Regenvanu, said.

Australian High Commissioner Bootle said Australia was working in partnership with Vanuatu to support the response and long-term recovery effort from the tropical cyclones.

"Our close partnership meant Australia could swiftly mobilise in support of Vanuatu's immediate response priorities.

“Australian humanitarian support is delivered in coordination with our FRANZ partners, France and New Zealand,” said High Commissioner Bootle.

HMAS Canberra follows the arrival of Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) aircraft in Vanuatu, delivering a 12-person rapid assessment team and Australia’s initial humanitarian assistance, which included shelters, water purification supplies and other essential items for impacted communities.

Prime Minister Kalsakau, Health Minister Marco Mahe, Trade Minister Matai Seremaiah and National Disaster Management Office officials including Director Abraham Nasak embarked on early aerial surveillance flights conducted by RAAF C-130J Hercules aircraft.

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