



Australian High Commission
Vanuatu

15 March 2024

Media Release

Celebrating Australia Day and the Vanuatu-Australia Partnership

Based on deep history, shared values and a commitment to strong action, Australia's partnership with Vanuatu went from strength to strength in 2023. Amidst challenges including three tropical cyclones and post-COVID economic pressures, we achieved major milestones such as supporting new health, education or security infrastructure across every province.

The Australian High Commission celebrated Australia Day and the Vanuatu-Australia Partnership on 14 March to mark the opening of the current Australian chancery in Port Vila on this week in 2007.



His Excellency Nikenike Vurobaravu, Head of State, Her Excellency Ms Heidi Bootle, Australian High Commissioner and the Honourable Charlot Salwai Tabimasmias, Prime Minister cutting the cake

President of the Republic of Vanuatu His Excellency Nikenike Vurobaravu, Prime Minister the Honourable Charlot Salwai Tabimasmias, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs, International Cooperation and External Trade the Honourable Matai Seremaiah



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Nawalu and other Ministers, partners and distinguished guests joined Australian High Commissioner to Vanuatu Her Excellency Heidi Bootle to mark the occasion.



ii President Vurobaravu and First Lady Rima Vurobaravu, Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Seremaiah, Finance Minister Salong, Internal Affairs Minister Koanapo and Australian Deputy High Commissioner Fisher

High Commissioner Bootle said it is shared culture and values that make Australia and Vanuatu good partners and friends.

“These values – equality of opportunity, strength of culture, democracy and a resilient, open economy – are what make us work so well together.

“Our partnership is premised on action: not only what we do and deliver together, but how we do it.”

When reflecting on 2023, including the three high impact cyclones Vanuatu faced in eight months, High Commissioner Bootle said it is through this strong partnership and resolve for swift action that Australia can respond so rapidly to Vanuatu’s needs.



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President of the Republic of Vanuatu His Excellency Nikenike Vurobaravu said Australia had been a steadfast partner of Vanuatu, from playing a pivotal role in Vanuatu's journey to independence to contributing very significantly to Vanuatu's growth.

“The history of cooperation forms the foundation of our strong ties we share today,” said President Vurobaravu.

“I would like to express the Vanuatu Government's unwavering commitment to further strengthen our partnership with Australia. Together we are not only stronger, but also capable of achieving remarkable feats.”



iii Australian High Commissioner Bootle and Senior Public Diplomacy Officer Eilyn Kaltongga greet President Vurobaravu

President Vurobaravu also acknowledged Hans Ahwang, a Moa Island man from the Torres Strait Islands in Australia, who performed on the evening.

“Your performance touched our hearts,” said President Vurobaravu.

Ahwang grew up learning traditional dances from his family and community and went on to train at the National Aboriginal Islander Skills Development Association (NAISDA).



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iv Hans Ahwang and Second Secretary Ria Bhagat

To acknowledge the strong ties and shared culture between Australia and Melanesia, Ahwang performed custom dances and sung a traditional Torres Strait Islander language hymn titled ‘Baba Waiyar’, joined by the Australian High Commission Choir.

Australia opened a Consulate in 1978, followed by a High Commission in Port Vila in 1980.

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