



TRR Conducts Nation Wide Mobile Signal Coverage Audit

The availability, reliability and quality of modern mobile telecommunications services are critical elements for Vanuatu's development. Mobile services world-wide have progressed through a succession of evolving and different technologies, which have enabled them to progress from basic voice and message services to, more recently, multimedia services including email, access to the internet and the conveyance of real time video.

In Vanuatu, mobile technology has evolved from GSM 2G, 2.5G, and 3G, to some areas with 3G+ broadband enabled technology in more recent times. Current mobile telecommunications services allow different economic and social sectors to benefit from enhanced communications, applications and services. High data speeds and pervasive mobile computing have also been drivers for the evolution of mobile technology in Vanuatu. There has been an introduction of various available broadband packages offered on 3G networks and latest ICT tools including smart phones and tablets in the market. Thus, the liberalization of the telecommunications market has had a huge impact on Vanuatu's society, culture and economy.

However, the newer technologies deployed have had a concentration on the two more densely populated areas of Port Vila and Luganville. To date, no comprehensive assessment has been made on the aggregated mobile signal coverage of TVL and Digicel. Currently, only TVL and Digicel offer mobile services in Vanuatu. Computer modelling of the two operators' mobile signal coverage indicates certain areas of the country with no or minimal mobile signal penetration – what we call unserved or underserved areas. Thus, TRR is reliant on their advice only for signal coverage statistics.

The Council of Ministers of the Republic of Vanuatu, pursuant to section 17 of the Act, approved a forward looking and visionary Universal Access Policy (UAP) in November 2013, to improve access to telecommunications service for locations, which are not served or not adequately served by existing services.

With the challenging UAP objectives set for industry to meet and TRR to manage its implementation, and as Vanuatu adapts to its competitive and increasingly dynamic telecommunications sector, it is timely and very important for TRR to conduct a full mobile coverage audit of the mobile networks, and also an audit of internet provision in the services it is provided by licensed operators in Vanuatu. This will enable TRR to have a holistic view of the exact availability of mobile services and mobile coverage in Vanuatu currently. The audit will provide direct benefit and important information to TRR and the Vanuatu Government in terms of their assessments and decisions to address universal access provisions, initiatives, and to identify areas in Vanuatu that currently have and those that currently lack mobile coverage; and to assist with roll out of new telecommunications services to those areas that are currently unserved or underserved. This will, ultimately, ensure a fair distribution of mobile coverage and services to all islands of Vanuatu, covering 98% of the population by 2018; which is the primary objective of the UAP. The audit will further assist TRR with its spectrum planning and management responsibilities for mobile networks that further evolve to technology such as LTE or greater convergence.

TRR has initiated a project to conduct a country wide mobile signal coverage audit. The audit will cover all existing telecommunication services: voice, narrowband and broadband internet services (i.e. the coverage audit will also include those provided on the ISP networks). The audit will involve TRR staff conducting manual telephone calls to contacts in specified areas and also data gathering via the use of special audit equipment to determine mobile signal strength and availability. Information that we obtain includes coverage areas e.g. inside or outside houses, signal coverage proximity to villages, signal strength, and internet access availability. At least two audits will be required before 1 January 2018. One audit needs to be conducted immediately to determine the current coverage and another

to establish empirically that the significant requirement of the UAP had been met and that is 98% of Vanuatu population shall have (and continue having after this date), access to telecommunications services..

To assist us with this task, TRR seeks information and feedback from the public on current mobile signal coverage and access. We would particularly like to hear from customers experiencing lack of mobile signal availability in the islands of **Aneityum, Futuna, Aniwa, South Tanna, East Erromango, South Epi, Central/South Pentecost, South Ambae, Central Maewo, South West Malekula, West Malekula, North West Malekula, South Santo, West Coast Santo, Central Santo, Gaua, Mere Lava, Mota, Vanua Lava, Mota Lava, Ureparapara and the Torres Islands.**

TRR urges anyone with relevant and helpful mobile signal coverage information to come forward and provide it by calling us on 27621 or emailing enquiries@trr.vu. We would appreciate if possible, a contact name, number and location, so that TRR staff could also perform a manual call test to the specified location to make further enquires. We thank you for your cooperation.