

## PRESS RELEASE

### TRR announces TVL, Telsat and Digicel Universal Access Policy telecommunications service rollout commitment



*(Picture) CEOs of UAP 'Players' and the Telecommunications and Radiocommunications Regulator*

The Telecommunications and Radiocommunications Regulator (TRR) is pleased to announce that it has now successfully signed Undertaking Agreements with the three Universal Access Policy (UAP) Players: Telecom Vanuatu Ltd, Telsat Broadband Ltd, and Digicel Vanuatu Ltd.

The Players have committed to multimillion dollar rollouts of new telecommunications infrastructure and/or upgrade of services to 25 rural sites which are currently underserved or unserved. In addition to this commitment the players, through the Undertaking Agreements, have agreed to work in partnership with TRR and the Government in implementing its UAP until 1 January 2018. TRR recognizes and greatly appreciates that commitment.

The rollouts include building/extending networks in remote areas such as in Torres, Vanua Lava, Santo, Maewo, Ambae, Malekula, Pentecost, Epi, Efate, Tanna and Aniwa. This is a major achievement and a milestone for the Government and the people of Vanuatu given that the three Players are making this investment at their own cost. These investments will positively impact on and stimulate other

Government services and business activities, such as education, health, tourism, trade, and agriculture across these islands.

The UAP is a Government Policy that requires the expansion of telecommunication services to underserved and unserved areas and TRR has been designated by the Government as the implementing agency. TRR will provide the required relevant support to the Players to ensure that the Policy aims and objectives are achieved during its implementation.

Most of the underserved and unserved areas are located in rural areas where access to telecommunications service is currently unavailable. Under the UAP, there must be 98% population coverage by 1st of January 2018 of the following telecoms services:

- Voice Services (mobile services);
- Narrowband Data Services including text messaging;
- Broadband(BB) Internet Services with download speed of at least 21 Mbps and upload speed of at least 12 Mbps

The UAP established a 'Pay' or 'Play' approach. Under the UAP 'Play' approach a service provider must meet its own cost of rolling out telecommunications services to underserved and unserved areas throughout Vanuatu, while the 'Pay' approach enforces non-Playing service providers to pay a levy imposed by the Regulator under the TRR Act 2009. So if a service provider decides to 'Play' under the UAP the Regulator will not impose a levy for the relevant year; provided that the service provider meets its commitment to roll out services to their nominated and TRR approved UAP sites at their own cost. For those service providers that decided not to 'Play' – Payers' - TRR has already and will continue to impose a levy of up to 4% levy of their net revenue each year. For the current year, TRR imposed a 4% levy on 'Pay' service providers.

TRR urges Chiefs and Village Leaders and Communities to assist and support the Players when they roll out their telecommunications networks in their islands to ensure these vital telecommunication services reach their shores and provide residents with access to these vital services. The Government, TRR and the Players are committed to ensure that these unserved or underserved areas are connected. So, in return, the people in these communities are urged to give the required support to assist the Players in building their networks.

The UAP rollouts are now gaining momentum, and they will complement the UAP's ICT school programs that are also being implemented in parallel to the Player's Undertakings, and as stimulation to it.

TRR sees this successful signing of the Undertaking Agreements as an excellent outcome for the Government, Businesses and the residents of Vanuatu in the rural communities, and also all three Players. This will afford a more flexible and effective rollout by all Players to achieve the UAP's 98% population coverage goal by 1<sup>st</sup> January 2018.

To this end, TRR wishes to thank TVL, Digicel and Telsat Limited for their support and also the Government in developing such an innovative policy to ensure our remote communities enjoy the same rights to communication services as those living in the urban areas.

TRR remains committed to its methodology and approach to achieving the UAP objectives by working cooperatively and constructively with the Government, operators, stakeholders and other relevant parties to ensure telecommunication services reach all our people in the islands; particularly remote islands.

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