

Prime Minister Salwai opens Naviso telemedicine system

By Jonas Cullwick

THE PRIME MINISTER, CHARLOT Salwai, opened the first telemedicine system for Vanuatu, at Naviso village on Maewo Thursday.

The Prime Minister who arrived at one of the remotest parts of the country by helicopter accompanied the Minister of Health, Toara Daniel, congratulated the chiefs and the community for recognizing the importance of working together to set up Maewo Telecommunications

Committee.

“Through the work of the committee everyone is at Naviso to open the Vanuatu Interisland Telemedicine and Learning Network because the committee understands the challenges faced by the people,” he said.

The Prime Minister urged everyone to continue to work together to build a better life for the community of Naviso and Maewo as a whole.

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Prime Minister Charlote Salwai (c) prepares to cut the ribbon to officially open the Vanuatu Interisland Telemedicine and Learning System at Naviso on East Maewo Thursday.

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Independence Day 'Anything That Floats' Parade

THE VANUATU CRUISING YACHT CLUB AND PORT Vila sailors are once again hosting the annual Vanuatu Independence Day boat parade on July 30 (Saturday).

Besides being great fun, this colourful and noisy parade through town is an important day on the sailing social calendar.

Details of the parade and celebrations this Saturday are:-

- 9.30am — Small boats meet and launch from the yacht club / Port Vila Boatyard (next to the temporary wharf)

- 10.30am -All boats meet at Paray Bay (the anchorage area in front of Origin Gas)

- 11.00am — Start of boat parade through town, to Numba One Cafe and around Irikeri Island before returning to Port Vila Boatyard

- 11.45am till 6.30pm — Family day with bar and BBQ at Port Vila Yacht Club

Everyone with a boat, canoe, yacht or anything else that floats is invited to join the parade, and if you do not have a boat please do still come along and space on a boat will be found for you.

Participants should please dress in national colours, bring Vanuatu national flags as well as whistles or anything else to make a lot of noise whilst on the water.

Kids (and adults) are also reminded to bring their own life jacket as well as a good stock of water bombs for the traditional water bombing during the parade!

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“Through Maewo Telecommunications Committee we find that we can use ICT to find ways to assist people on the issues of health and education for Maewo people.

“It opens the way for many other activities especially access to information on business, agriculture for example.

“Telemedicine that we've come together to officially open today is one way to be at our village but still can receive good advice from a doctor abroad.”

The Prime Minister added that Thursday couldn't have been a better time to meet at Naviso for opening of the telemedicine project.

When the Prime Minister and the Minister of Health arrived by helicopter their delegation that included MP for Maewo, Ian Wilson, DG of Health, George Taleo, Chief Government Information Officer, Gerard Metsan, and Regulator of TRR Dalcie Bani were led by custom dancers through the stages in the life of the village of hardship until the arrival at the village clinic the site of the Naviso telemedicine project.

The people of the village always carry sick patients on stretchers

made of copra sacks up a steep 500 metre hill and across the island to get medical help at Kerebei Health Centre on the west of the island or Lolowai Hospital on nearby Ambae or Northern District Hospital in Luganville, Santo.

“This is a story of many communities, still suffering with poor road conditions, and lack of ways to communicate with families in Port Vila or Luganville or next village. Now Naviso and Kerebei have access to doctors in Luganville and Port Vila through the telemedicine.

“We find that we can set up telemedicine in remote place and we find that if we work together and share resources we can make these through the whole Vanuatu,” Prime Minister Salwai added.

Ezikiel Boelum, Chairman, Maewo Telecommunications Committee said Thursday was a great time because it marked the celebration of a big achievement.

He thanked the Government of Prime Minister Charlot Salwai and Peace Corps and their partners for recognizing the difficulties of communication particularly telecommunications for Naviso village since independence and even before that.

“Thank you for good working relations of everyone to face this telecommunications challenge,

which allowed everyone to gather at Naviso for the opening of the first ever telemedicine system and learning network at Naviso through the internet system.

“The people thank you PM especially for your and the government's support for this project.”

He said the Prime Minister's presence and that of the Minister of Health has uplifted the people's hearts because since independence, the most remote village in the country was able to have the presence of the country's leader who arrived by helicopter.

Boelum thanked Maewo MP Ian Wilson, for his support and Kacific and their partners Telsat Pacific for their assistance. “To you I say you are our good neighbor and friend.” He also thanked TRR and Office of the Government Chief Information Officer for their support.

“Thank you to Steve and Alexis Cullen for your great help. I say Maewo is your island. World communication links Naviso today through the telemedicine project because of your dedication and commitment to helping the people of Naviso and Maewo.”

He was glad that Naviso now has access to internet allowing for improvement for the services of health and education for the people of the village.

MP Ian Wilson thanked the PM for visiting the people of the remote village of his constituency, which he said showed a mark of respect for the island and its people for the first time after 36 years.

He told the Prime Minister that every time a person was very sick in the past they nailed a sack and carried them over the hill and across the island to Lolowai. Now they can make internet contact and get medical advice from any doctor anywhere in Vanuatu and around the world.

“This is a great achievement.

“Last week a patient was assisted with the use of the telemedicine system preventing the patient from being carried over the island again.

“I thank you Alexis Cullen for achieving the project in front of the PM and people of Maewo today.”

Minister of Health, Toara Daniel, said the Government will continue to promote a healthy and wealthy Vanuatu through the use of ICT.

“ICT is becoming an important tool in the improvement of the healthcare delivery system today that it can link urban human resources to support remote and rural health facilities.

“Thank you to the chiefs and people of Naviso and former Peace Corp volunteer Alexis Cullen for this achievement,” he said.