



Submission to the Australian Government Review of Australian Broadcasting Services in the Asia-Pacific, July 2018

By **Hon. Charlot Salwai Tabimasm**, Prime Minister of the Republic of Vanuatu

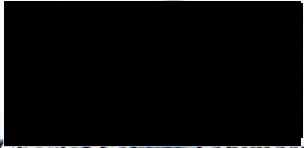
I make this submission on behalf of the Government of Vanuatu as a reiteration of our support in 2017 for the resumption and retention of ABC shortwave services to this region.

In last year's submission to the Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications Australian Broadcasting Corporation Amendment (Restoring Shortwave Radio) Bill 2017 we noted that removing Radio Australia shortwave to Vanuatu could potentially cost many lives in the likelihood of another major natural disaster like Tropical Cyclone Pam in 2015. I noted then that Australia's shortwave service helped save Ni-Vanuatu lives and also saved Australian taxpayers' money.

The Vanuatu Disaster Management Office reminds us that our citizens, many of whom live in remote outlying islands, have limited access to modern communications technology. We also understand that digital broadcasting alternatives are unlikely to be comprehensively implemented for many years in our remote areas. In times of crisis when other forms of media like FM and digital services are unavailable such communities rely on broadcasts safely transmitted from outside the disaster zone. This is exactly the role Radio Australia shortwave broadcasts played during Cyclone Pam. For us shortwave is not out-dated technology - it is appropriate and 'fit-for-purpose' and an important means to inform and safeguard Ni-Vanuatu people.

As well having an important role in disaster risk reduction and management, ABC broadcasting brought reliable information about the Asia-Pacific region and the rest of the world to listeners around Vanuatu. Our people valued accurate and up-to-date stories on many topics – arts and culture, sports, politics, business, science, technology, environment and so on. We appreciated that reports were presented in English, French and also our lingua franca of Bislama. Promotions such as the Pacific Break competition allowed some of our young musicians to compete with their peers from around the Pacific and even receive recognition in the form of airfares and stage performances as winners. ABC broadcasts via Radio Australia shortwave contributed a great deal to a feeling of connection to the wider world for citizens in every part of the country.

My government hopes that as a result of this review the ABC is supported to begin anew a process of re-engaging with audiences across Vanuatu via shortwave services and other co-operative broadcasting endeavours. Radio Australia is one of the most tangible ways Australia communicates and connects with the many communities around Vanuatu. We trust a successful outcome of this review sees this vital relationship re-established, strengthened, and continuing for many years into the future.


Hon. Charlot Salwai Tabimasm
Prime Minister
The Republic of Vanuatu



cc The Australian High Commissioner to Vanuatu