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**Utilities Regulatory Authority Retreat 2019.**

The Utilities Regulatory Authority (the Authority) management on an annual basis facilitates a team Retreat to ensure annual deliverables align with its Vision and Mission. The Retreat allows for coordinated collaborations between the Authority and stakeholders towards achieving outcomes and goals that adhere to overarching Government policies and Vision.

In 2019 the Authority held its Retreat at Lakatoro Malekula. Despite just celebrating its 10 years Anniversary last year, the Authority has been involved in activities aligned with the its Mission and contributed immensely to addressing utility customer grievances, developing and implementing regulatory guidelines, procedures and standards as well as advising the Government on regulatory matters.

*"Promoting economic and social development in Vanuatu by ensuring Reliable, Safe, Affordable & Accessible electricity and water services, in the rural area"* is the theme of this year's Retreat.

The theme sets the tone of the Retreat with the intention to enable presenters and participants to appreciate the important elements of what regulation means from a market context in Vanuatu, to support Government, stakeholders and consumers

With this, the Authority aims to ensure that the businesses in Vanuatu either locally owned or owned by foreign investors and customers have access to affordable, safe and reliable water and electricity service..

The CEO Mr. John Obed Alilee and the team have had the opportunity to listen and view presentations from local business owners, Department of Water Resources, Norsup Hospital, Vanuatu Island Bungalows & Tourism Association, Vanuatu Project Management Unit and the Department of Energy on the challenges encountered on daily stands.

The team visited the Norsup Hospital and observed the level of service provided to the people of Malekula by the hospital despite the Water challenges they face. The Authority will work closely with the Ministry concerned to ensure patients and hospital staff can have access to safe and reliable water and electricity services at all times. During the Retreat and a site visit the Authority team came to appreciate the efforts by Vanuatu Project Management Unit and the Department of Energy in ensuring that the Brenwe Hydro Power

project at the North West Malekula under the Government Energy Access Program (VEAP) is on track for implementation by mid-2019..

Given the major water supply challenges faced by the people of Malekula the URA CEO acknowledged the Department of Water Resources for their hard work and commitment in undertaking their responsibilities as policy makers, service providers and the entity responsible for overlooking water projects throughout Vanuatu.

The CEO indicated during the 1st day of the Retreat that the Authority will commit to working with the Government Authorities and Agencies in 2019 to improve and rehabilitate the Government water supply network on Lakatoro ,Malekula.

The Utilities Regulatory Authority (the Authority) was set up under the Utilities Regulatory Authority Act No. 11 of 2007. The Authority is an independent body and its primary purpose is to maximize access to safe, reliable and affordable electricity and water services to homes and businesses, and to protect the long-term interests of consumers throughout Vanuatu.

The Authority is mandated by the Utilities Regulatory Authority Act No. 11 of 2007 (the 'Act') to regulate commercialized water services throughout Vanuatu to ensure the services are reliable, customer friendly, affordable and available to all who demand it.