

**Press Release: 28 September 2012**

**URA will be without one Commissioner and CEO**



In a letter dated 20 July 2012, the Honourable Minister of Finance announced to the Commission of the Utilities Regulatory Authority (URA) that he would not renew the contract of the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Carmine Piantedosi, who is also a part-time Commissioner.

His contract ends on 30 September 2012. When he arrived in Vanuatu in October 2008, Mr. Piantedosi founded the Authority based on the *Utilities Regulatory Authority Act No. 11 of 2007* that had been approved by the Vanuatu Parliament.

The Honourable Minister thanked him for, among other things, "Setting up and development of required processes and systems in place for the function of the URA; Review and awarding of electricity tariff throughout the four concessions (a reduction to tariff for the first time in Vanuatu); Audit of the Sarakata Hydro Scheme and Sarakata Renewal fund; Reviewing of pre-payment meter application in Vanuatu; and Ongoing regulatory advice to Government of Vanuatu on utilities in Vanuatu."

Mr. Piantedosi said: "My biggest achievement during these four years in Vanuatu was completing the first electricity tariff review for Vanuatu which resulted in tariff reduction for consumers. But just setting up the first electricity and water regulator office and knowing that the Authority will continue to protect the consumers in Vanuatu even when I am gone, is the thing I am the most proud of."

The Honourable Minister did not provide any reason for his decision but emphasized that he was aware that a gap in leadership would be detrimental to the work of the Authority. He is working in collaboration with the World Bank and AusAID to find a replacement through an international search.

During this interim period, the Chairperson Mr. Johnson Naviti and part-time Commissioner Paul Kaun will take a more active role in managing the work of the URA. They will rely on five local staff, including Manager Regulation Lizzie Taura, and four expatriate staff and consultants.

Their task is to continue working with the same standards, and to make sure regulatory independence, integrity and transparency are upheld.

The Authority has an important mission: increase access to safe, reliable and affordable electricity and water services, and to protect the long-term interests of consumers throughout Vanuatu. Even a gap in leadership will not change its determination to help, protect and inform electricity and water consumers.

In the coming weeks and months, the Authority will publish its Prepayment Meter System Final Decision and the Regulatory Requirements Framework Paper, as well as start new Public Education Program sessions and TV ads. It will continue to monitor utilities operating in Vanuatu as well as advise the new Government.

The Commissioners and staff would like to thank Carmine Piantedosi for being a strong and understanding leader, who supported capacity building and career growth; who encouraged sharing opinions and knowledge; and who made sure we ate and laughed enough.

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### **About the Utilities Regulatory Authority**

The URA was set up under the *Utilities Regulatory Authority Act No. 11 of 2007*. The Authority acts independently of the Government and its primary purpose is to increase access to safe, reliable and affordable electricity and water services, and to protect the long-term interests of consumers throughout Vanuatu. In the electricity sector, the Authority monitors the concessions operated by UNELCO in Malekula, Port Vila and Tanna; and Vanuatu Utilities and Infrastructure Ltd (VUI) in Luganville. In addition, the Authority manages consumer disputes and advises the Government on matters related to electricity and water. It also reviews tariffs under the rules of the Concessions Agreements and relevant legislation.

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