

**CEREMONY TO CELEBRATE THE HANDING OVER OF THE  
SANTO EAST COAST ROAD**

**11 APRIL 2011**

**KEY NOTE ADDRESS BY THE NEW ZEALAND HIGH COMMISSIONER**

I would like to thank the people and chiefs of Port Olry for their warm welcome today.

It is a great honour to represent the New Zealand Government at this ceremony to celebrate the handing over of the Santo East Coast Road.

New Zealand's relationship with the island of Santo is a long-standing one. It began with the Melanesian Mission in the 1840s. It was reinforced by the presence of New Zealand military personnel in Santo during the Second World War. It continues with this road.

I am pleased that New Zealand was able to assist the Government of Vanuatu, the United States Government and the Millennium Challenge Corporation to build this new road.

I would like to acknowledge also the contribution of Downer Vanuatu, the local people who worked on the road, and the local communities who contributed to its successful completion.

I am pleased because this new road will help the people of Santo. It will help them to take their produce to market. It will help their children go to school. It will help sick people travel to hospital. It will help tourists to visit the many attractions of Santo.

I am also pleased because of what this new road tells us about Vanuatu's reputation for good government.

Vanuatu was the only Pacific Island Country to qualify for Millennium Challenge Corporation First Compact funding. This tells us that Vanuatu has a proud record of ruling its people justly. Of investing in its people. And of promoting economic freedom.

This new road is a valuable asset. Let us all play our part to protect and maintain it.

Vanuatu's reputation for good government is more than valuable. It is priceless. Let us all play our part to protect and maintain it too.

Tank yu tumas.