

# Tourism in Torba promising

## Australian gov't applauded for its contribution

By Anita Roberts

**TOURISM IN TORBA PROVINCE** looks promising and its small beautiful islands are looking forward to welcoming more tourists in the upcoming months/years now that more new tourism products have been developed.

The Department of Tourism (DOT) found it very hard to promote tourism in Torba in previous years.

Today, the province is still facing problems uncommon to other provinces as infrequent shipping to and from the islands and poor market infrastructure. Communication is also poor.

However, compared to other provinces, Torba has untapped abundant resources and its cultures are unique with a wealth of beautiful scenery that remains some of Vanuatu's mysteries.

Two years just after setting up at Sola on Vanua Lava, the Australian government-funded Technical and Vocational Education Training (TVET) Program, through its Torba TVET Centre, has done substantial work with the DOT to improve tourism standards and marketing.

So far, over 20 local businesses on Mota Lava, Gaua and Rah Islands, ranging from cultural festivals, tours and bungalows engaged in the 'TVET for Tourism Skills' program have been marketed internationally.

It includes seven bungalows on Mota Lava and Rah that have been launched by the

Department of Tourism on December last year.

Just last week, nearly 10 tourism new products were declared open to visitors on the second biggest island, Gaua, having met all DOT's standards.

It includes five new bungalows, four tours and one attraction site.

Chez Maureen, Tammesse Bungalows, Wongrass Travel Lodge, Peba and Weul Bungalows all fall under the category of island style bungalow. Two accredited women's water music groups and two newly built campsites were part of the tours including Lake Letas as the newly launched attraction site.

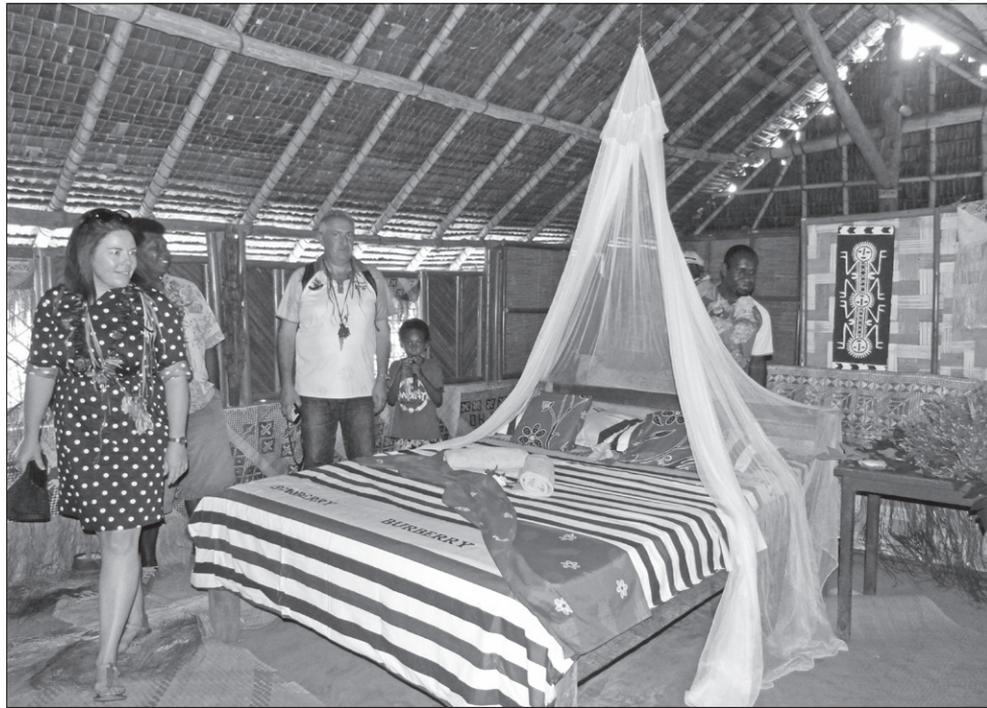
According to the TVET Consultant, Pascal Guillet, one of the bungalows is a new product while four of the others existed before TVET came to the province but with limited knowledge to meet tourist needs and expectations.

Coaching after coaching, all businesses have met required standards and will be marketed internationally through the Sanma and Torba Call Centre.

General Manager of the Vanuatu Tourism Office, Linda Kalpoi, said the recent launching of these tourism products proved that Torba is now ready for tourism and so it is high time that VTO shift its focus to market the province.

There is so much to showcase about Torba to the world, she added.

Despite the remoteness of the islands, the Director General of the Ministry of Tourism,



First Secretary of the Australian High Commission, Alison George, during an inspection of the Wongrass Bungalow



One of Gaua's accredited women's water music

Marokon Alilee, has urged the people from Torba especially those involved in tourism, not to complain but keep striving to meet standards.

"The government is working to increase the number of visitors to Vanuatu," he said.

The next day after the launching, the national airline announced the arrival of a new twin otter aircraft (YJ-AV12) that will be based on Santo to service the northern province. This will boost tourism for the province.

President of Torba Provincial Government Council, Erick Shedrack, encouraged everyone; villagers, chiefs and community leaders including stakeholders to accept the challenge and cooperate for the province's betterment.