

Call Centre supports provincial economy

By Anita Roberts

"HAVING OUR OWN Malampa tourism call centre is more promising than working with travel agents in Port Vila," said the owner and manager of the Nabelchel Bungalows, Hosea Tesi.

Nabelchel Bungalows located near Norsup Airport in Central Malekula. Nabelchel began its operation in 2004, seven years before the call centre was launched in 2011.

Mr Tesi said he faced difficulties during those years

when he was liaising with travel agents in Port Vila. He made it clear that the call centre was a huge achievement, because it reduced the problem of telecommunications, booking and marketing.

Malampa Travel Call Centre is the first internet-based call centre of its type in Vanuatu and provides direct communications and booking support to local entrepreneurs from the province.

The Malampa Department

of Tourism product development officer, Edna Paolo, confirmed the call centre received bookings almost every day.

The call centre was officially launched with nine products. Currently, it has 32, including some from Ambrym.

"Gaining easy access to communications for products has motivated owners of the existing bungalows and tours to work extra hard, and more and more new tourism products and

activities are being established," said Mrs Paolo.

The call centre received 'start-up funding', or support, from NZAid, the Department of Tourism, the Australian-government funded TVET Program, Telecom Vanuatu Ltd, and the Malampa Provincial Council.

Since its establishment, the Malampa TVET Centre has provided a series of training and coaching sessions to local bungalow owners and cultural tour

groups with significant numbers of products - now in the hundreds - receiving national accreditations.

The training and business development support programs, provided through the Australian-government funded TVET business programs, has enabled participants to dramatically improve the quality of their small businesses and put them in a position where they can advertise their products to international tourists through the

Malampa Travel Call Centre.

The success of the TVET Centre tourism training and coaching program, the development of the Malekula Land Transport Association and the Department of Tourism's Malampa Travel Call Centre lies principally in that fact that the initiatives work together to strengthen the province's economic development.

Malampa Call Centre will be 100 % financially self-sustaining by 2014.