

Australia's foreign minister announces AU\$1 million for disability

By Anita Roberts

AUSTRALIA'S FOREIGN AFFAIRS MINISTER Julia Bishop has announced AU\$1 million fund to assist disabled people when she came visiting on Thursday this week.

People living with disabilities face hardships every day, from physical obstacles in buildings to barriers in employment and let alone personal fulfillment.

They struggle to survive suffering poor health and are often denied equal access to other essential services such as education.

2009 census conveyed that around 45,000 people in Vanuatu are living with a disability. This figure has increased as the population grows.

Promoting the full inclusion and participation of people with disabilities in every aspect of the community is a priority of the Australian Government-funded Technical and Vocational Education Training (TVET) sector strengthening program.



TVET has been supporting this vulnerable group of people to claim their rightful place in the society.

The program has been investing in workshops and training to unlock their vast potential; promote their independence by engaging them in businesses activities that makes them

feel confident in improving their quality of life.

The Disability Inclusion Development Fund (DIDF) was secured through the office of the Australian High Commissioner in Vanuatu. DIDF was established under the auspices of Australia's aid

program.

Forty countries have applied for the fund but only Vanuatu and six other countries were approved. The fund will be used over a three-year period.

The fund will be managed under the umbrella of the TVET 'Skills for Economic Program'. It is specifically provided to deliver skills training and business development opportunities for people with disabilities.

The TVET Disability Inclusion Officer, Sherol George, said "the money will be used to strengthen training providers to develop disability inclusion plans so that they can open their doors to people with disabilities.

"For example, making school infrastructures such as toilets and bathrooms accessible to people with disabilities.

"Other needs include improving disability data, working with trainers and raising awareness in schools and communities, adjusting curriculum and recruiting sign language

interpreters," she added.

George said there is plan to trial the fund with 2 to 4 training providers before rolling out across Vanuatu.

The fund will support the implementation of the national disability inclusion policy for the TVET Sector. Consultations have begun with key stakeholders to get feed backs on how to implement the fund.

Australia was applauded for its continuous assistance to Vanuatu.

Australia has a strong record in disability inclusion development. The government of Australia puts disability at heart, said Minister Bishop.

"I am delighted that through our aid program , we continue to drive economic growth.

"We want to ensure that everyone in Vanuatu has the capacity to work and is given an opportunity to use his/her qualification and experience for the benefit of the community," said Ms Bishop.