Territorians return from cyclone damaged Vanuatu

27 March 2015

The first group of Territorians deployed to Vanuatu to assist in the recovery following Tropical Cyclone Pam will return home to Darwin tonight.

Seven Northern Territory members of the Australia Medical Assistance Team (AusMAT) were the first Australians deployed to the disaster zone just days after the cyclone hit.

Members of the AusMAT have played a key role on the ground in Vanuatu, and were critical to the immediate recovery mission. Twenty-seven Territorians and Victorians formed the AusMAT and spent up to 14 days in the country.

Minister for Health John Elferink said the AusMAT was responsible for providing a lead role in the coordination and assistance of hospital repairs and the restoration of ward services. They also coordinated air retrieval of patients injured in Tropical Cyclone Pam.

“The AusMAT worked closely with staff at the main hospital at Vanuatu’s capital, Port Villa, and treated 1341 patients during their deployment,” Mr Elferink said.

“Since their arrival on the island the AusMAT has assisted with the delivery of 92 babies. One parent even named their baby boy Paul, after one of the team members.

“This goes to show the deep impact that the team had on the community. When disaster strikes, it is amazing how quickly strong bonds and relationships can be forged.

“The Darwin-based National Critical Care and Trauma Response Centre have been at the forefront of the recovery efforts and have been working hard both here in the Territory following Cyclone Lam, and in Vanuatu following Cyclone Pam to ensure operations run smoothly.

“I praise all team members who left their friends and family behind to offer a helping hand to our South Pacific Asian Neighbours.”

The remainder of the AusMAT will return home to Melbourne and Darwin tomorrow.

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