



# MSM Vanuatu Mission 2017 – Report in brief

## Brief History

Medical Sailing Ministries (MSM) ([www.msm.org.au](http://www.msm.org.au)) began in 2009 to provide remote-access transport and logistical support amongst the islands of Vanuatu, in partnership with the Vanuatu Prevention of Blindness Project, using the Westernport-based 53 foot steel yacht Chimere. It is a practical Christian outreach of North Ringwood Uniting Church (NRUC) operating in partnership with the Presbyterian Church of Vanuatu (PCV Health) and the Vanuatu (Govt) Ministry of Health, with a particular focus on training, resourcing and building up local Vanuatu people & organisations.

Missions were conducted in 2009, 2010, 2013 and once again this year, 2017. Volunteers commit between 14 and 30 days, with the overall mission extending from May to November including the time taken to sail Chimere to and from Vanuatu. Close to 100 volunteers have been involved in the program over the years – including sailors, dentists, doctors, optometrists, nurses and oral health practitioners – coming from as far away as the UK, Germany, Switzerland and New Zealand.

In addition to the initial vision of providing remote-access medical transport, further initiatives and programs have been established in response to needs as they have arisen, including:

- The Vanuatu Dental Care Service
- The Paunangisu Village Partnership
- The Supporters Tour
- Low Smoke Cooking Stoves – design, construction & promotion
- Best Public Toilet in the South Pacific ([www.bestpublictoilet.org](http://www.bestpublictoilet.org))
- Village Experience Day tour (Plus the “North Efate Tour Trail” promotion) <http://bestpublictoilet.org/wp-content/uploads/2016-06-North-Efate-Tour-Trail-Flyer.pdf>
- WhatAidWhere ([www.whataidwhere.org](http://www.whataidwhere.org)) & donated goods
- Providing medical equipment and training to the Vila Central Hospital
- Health education (schools, nurses, clinics, communities)
- Support and training of local community health, dental and eye-care workers



*Sailing amongst the islands of Vanuatu – can't have a rainbow without the rain*



*Each clinic requires the transportation of a lot of gear*



*Conducting the National Oral Health Survey in a village setting*

## The Past 12 Months

Four outreach missions have been conducted this year in conjunction with PCV Health. Each mission team comprised between 12 and 15 people, both Ni-Van and overseas volunteers, taking dental, eyecare and medical services to a total of eighteen islands. (Tanna, Aniwa, Futuna, Erromango, Emae, Tongoa, Epi, Lamén, Paama, Ambrym, Santo, Ambae, Pentecost, Maewo, Merelava, Gaua, Vanualava, Ureparapara.) This year MSM is also coordinating a National Oral Health Survey on behalf of the Vanuatu Ministry of Health. It is the first such survey ever to be conducted in Vanuatu and is being done in accordance with strict World Health Organisation (WHO) methodologies. The survey will encompass around 1% of the population (approx. 2,800 people) across 5 different age cohorts, in 90 locations (urban, rural & remote) and on more than 30 of the country's 63 inhabited islands. It involves a tooth-by-tooth oral examination, plus a detailed interview questionnaire conducted in the local language by mostly local volunteers and health professionals.

Once completed, the final report will be published on the WHO oral health database and used as the foundation for the establishment of a National Oral Health Plan, to address the health-catastrophe that is unfolding as a result of the adoption of a largely sugar-based diet; as is the case in most Pacific-island nations.



*Delivery crew*



*Mission 3*



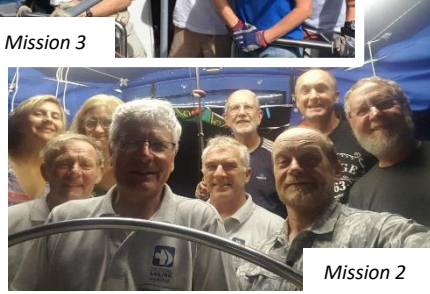
*Mission 2*



*Return crew*



*Mission 1*



*Mission 2*



*Mission 3*

*MSM Vanuatu Mission 2017 involved eight sailing teams (10 if you count the Melbourne to Sydney return leg) plus four health teams, working in partnership with local Vanuatu health professionals and the Ministry of Health.*



## Not quite medical ...

In addition to their usual activities, in the course of the five-month mission the MSM team were also able to assist several clinics and communities in a range of other areas such as repairing solar and electrical systems, replacing taps and fixing leaky pipes. A Mayday call from a sinking German yacht was also answered while at Resolution Bay (Tanna), leading to the rescue of their 42 foot yacht, with 29 people plus their belongings, evacuated from Lolowai (Ambae) to Luganville, on account of the volcanic eruption threat.



*Nurse Cathy West holds one of the children to give the mother a break*

*The MSM crew fixed leaky pipes, taps and electrical systems wherever they went*



*Ambae evacuation; Loading the last two aboard at Lolowai*



*Ambae evacuation; arriving at Luganville with 29 people, plus their belongings*



*MSM crew member Matt Bryant installed a light in the Sola pharmacy where none had shone for 7 years!*



*Five religious stoles were presented to a variety of pastors including Father Levy on Gaua (left) the Anglican Pastor on the island of Merelava and (president) Pastor Obed Moses (Right)*



**Vanuatu**

- ★ National capital
- TORBA Province name
- ⊙ Province capital
- Road

**Mission 4 (Sep)**

Islands visits	7
Clinics held	8
Team Number	15

**Saturday 30/9/2017**

Chimere and crew assist with the evacuation of 29 people and their belongings from Lolowai on the island of Ambae to Luganville on the island of Santo in response to an imminent volcanic threat.

**Mission 3 (Aug)**

Islands visits	2
Clinics held	5
Team Number	12

**Mission 2 (Jul)**

Islands visits	6
Clinics held	7
Team Number	13

**Mission 1 (Jun)**

Islands visits	4
Clinics held	8
Team Number	14

**Supporters Tour, 6-16 October**

Eighteen people arrive in Port Vila for a grassroots Vanuatu experience with resort-style comfort

**Wednesday 6/9/2017**

Dr Barry Stewart provides emergency dental treatment to a Dutch yachtswoman, diverted from her Fiji to PNG course on account of severe pain (toothache)

**Leave Port Vila on 19 October 2017 returning to Westernport (VIC)**

**8 November 2017**

Leaving Port Vila on Thursday 19 October Chimere's volunteer crew of 5 made a brief stop at Chesterfield Reef, were again generously hosted in Sydney by the Cruising Yacht Club of Australia, before completing the final leg south and through Bass Strait to Westernport, arriving on 8 November 2017

**Arrive in Port Vila on 6 June 2017 after leaving Westernport (VIC) on 15 May 2017**

Leaving Westernport on Monday 15 May Chimere's volunteer crew of 5 were hosted at the Cruising Yacht Club of Australia in Rushcutters Bay Sydney, before making the 10 day Tasman/ Coral Sea crossing; arriving in Port Vila on 6 June 2017

**Sunday night 25/6/2017**

Chimere and crew answer MayDay call from sinking German yacht and complete successful night rescue and temporary repair

Islands visits	18
Clinics held	28
Volunteers	41
Local health workers	8

*Between missions, Chimere spent some time at the Port Vila Waterfront*



## Supporters Tour

A total of 18 people came on the Supporters Tour (6-16 October) raising money to help fund this year's mission, increasing the two-way connections and building skills and experience in the "business" of tour operation.



The Supporters Tour included a "Village Experience Tour" to the village of Paunangisu, "The 3 Hour Tour", Day Sails on Chimere and complementary use of the BEST Public Toilet in The South Pacific



## The Future – 2018 & Beyond

We do not expect Chimere to return to Vanuatu next year. However, a whole group of new volunteers from both inside and outside NRUC will be working diligently to process, collate and make sense of, the survey data and other information collected in relation to the National Oral Health Survey of Vanuatu. Dr Barry Stewart and others, in partnership with the Vanuatu Ministry of Health, will then compile the final report and begin advising on the eventual National Oral Health Plan.

Meanwhile work will continue in the many other areas of activity mentioned earlier, with emphasis given to ways in which business income might be developed in Vanuatu to directly fund and support the medical program and other employment-related initiatives. This is in the face of cuts in overseas aid (by the Australian Government) to the long-standing PCV Health program we have been assisting.

Whilst Medical Sailing Ministries is a very practical expression of our Christian faith, as we explain to our potential volunteers ... *"no religious affiliations or requirements are placed on volunteers, or for that matter those that are served, only expectations of respect, compassion and generosity to fellow team members and the people of Vanuatu."*

( <http://msm.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/2017-04-Cruising-Helmsman-MSM-Letter.pdf> )

Medical Sailing Ministries might have begun as a dream – a Spirit-led vision – but it has only grown and been sustained with the amazing and far-reaching support – in prayer, fund-raising, volunteers, encouragement and donated goods – from so many people and organisations. A sincere thanks to everyone for being prepared to get "on board" with this project.

A more comprehensive run-down on MSM's activities can be found at [www.msm.org.au](http://www.msm.org.au)

Blessings in Christ

Rob Latimer & Mike Clarke  
MSM Coordinators, October 2017



Working with Vanuatu dentists in a village location



Above: A village oral health presentation conducted by local health professionals (Ureparapara Is, Banks Group)



Left: The "After" shot from Mission 4 in 2017. Aboard Chimere - Banks Group, Vanuatu. A mix of 15 people – sailors, doctors, dentists, nurses, plus eye-care and dental care workers, both volunteer and local, including Vanuatu (Govt) Ministry of Health and PCV Health staff (ie Presbyterian Church of Vanuatu Health department)