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# ROAD RAGE

## Despite reassurances, Port Vila drivers and pedestrians face unsafe road conditions

By Dan McGarry

**CLOSURES, SAFETY PROBLEMS,** delays and disruptions are fraying tempers in the capital as the DFAT/ADB-funded Port Vila Urban Development Project lurches on.

In a March interview, Vanuatu Project Management Unit staff assured the Daily Post that road safety concerns were being raised during regular weekly meetings, and that cautions had been issued.

They seem to have had no effect.

Since then, the Daily Post has witnessed numerous safety issues in areas currently being worked on as part of the Australia-funded Port Vila Urban Development Project. Just this week, the driver of a road compactor was seen trying to manage traffic from the driver's seat of his machine as he attempted to work on a section of road in Nambatu.

No flag crew was evident, in spite of the fact that the work in this section was evidently planned and still ongoing as of yesterday.

Drivers at the scene were obviously confused, as contradictory indicator lights



Closures, safety problems, delays and disruptions are fraying tempers in the capital as the DFAT/ADB-funded Port Vila Urban Development Project lurches on.

were seen, and vehicles were seen slowing, stopping and abruptly changing direction.

At nearly the same time, drivers entering the USP roundabout were being waved through the middle of the circular core of the roundabout by workers standing on the opposite side of the road. Again, no traffic

flow signs were present. And again, confusion was rife, with one near-collision witnessed by the Daily Post at the time.

No traffic management (i.e. STOP/SLOW) signs, barriers, traffic cones or other guides were visible in either location.

In the past, responsibility was laid on subcontractors,

but in these particular cases, only RMS workers were visible.

The Daily Post submitted a written request for comment to the Vanuatu Project Management Unit two days ago, asking what steps had been taken to end these flagrant road safety lapses, and why these issues kept

recurring.

A VPMU spokesman responded, indicating that a response was forthcoming, but would have to be approved 'through protocols'. This is standard procedure in a number of donor-funded projects where messaging is strictly controlled. Both Roughton, the managing

contractor, nor RMS, responsible for the actual construction work, are contractually obligated not to discuss the project with the media.

This is the third time the Daily Post has reported on serious road safety concerns, first in September 2017, and then in January of this year, and again in March.

Tempers were flaring on social media this week concerning this much-delayed project, as work at the USP roundabout caused what one disgruntled motorist described as 'gridlock'. The motorist reported only 200 metres of progress over a nearly twenty-minute period on Wednesday morning.

Others reported that they had resorted to leaving before 07:00 each morning, because the alternative was to arrive late at work.

In March, a road safety awareness campaign was announced, and while it's understood that work is ongoing, sources have confirmed that it is not proceeding according to schedule.

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