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## VT28M for VCH Sewage Plant Upgrade

By Anita Roberts  
Jan 25, 2024

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The Health Minister and officials conveyed following a visit that a photo posted on social media was captured from a re property, not at the sewage plant site. Photos: Supplied

By Anita Roberts

The Government has already allocated VT28 million to upgrade the Vila Central Hospital (VCH) Sewage Treatment Plant, said the Acting Director General (DG) of the Ministry of Health (MOH), Dr Samuel Posikai Tapo.

He said the ministry will be engaging a technical company to help with the tender specification for a bidding process to start and contractors can submit bids for the upgrade works, expected to be complete around May.

According to the Asset and Infrastructure Manager of MOH, Edmond Tavala, the system is functioning well and requires some minor improvements.

He said the plant's filtering system helps to reduce unwanted substances before waste is discharged to the water, thus there is no possibility of mass contamination.

Acting Health DG Tapo said people must understand that not all discharges at the Lagoon are hospital sewage, businesses and communities also reside along the lagoon.

“It's not only the VCH Sewage Plant located at the area, there are communities and businesses too. Just because the sewage system is located there, all blames are made to the MOH,” he stressed.

“A lot of people live along the area and a lot of rubbish ended up in the lagoon where there is limited circulation of water. Also, if there is sewage pollution of the water then there will be an increase number of diarrhea patients from the area, but there hasn't been an increase.”

Asset Manager Tavala said water tests conducted end of last year as part of the ongoing monitoring of the lagoon confirmed no presence of escherichia coli (e.coli) at the discharge area. E. coli is an indicator of human waste contamination in water.

Currently, a consultancy company is being engaged to look into the sewage system and will provide recommendations on what changes and improvements are needed, he conveyed.

Tavala and Tapo were speaking to the Vanuatu Daily Post after some photos were shared on Facebook alleging sewage contamination at the Emten Lagoon, causing public uproar on Tuesday this week.

Tavala was among some health officials who accompanied the Minister of Health, John Still Tari Qetu, to the discharge site. He said they were disappointed to find out the photos were captured from a private residential property and not at the discharge area.

Acting DG Tapo revealed that the MOH through its Compliance Unit will step up efforts to ensure all businesses and companies in Port Vila Town are discharging their sewage properly, as stipulated under the Public Health Act. The same will happen for businesses along the Emten

Lagoon.

Meanwhile, Minister Qetu and Tapo were summoned by the Head of the Government, Prime Minister (PM) Charlot Salwai yesterday to explain the VT2 million that was given to the national broadcaster.

This was after some prominent leaders have called on the PM to look into the decision, following many negative social media comments.