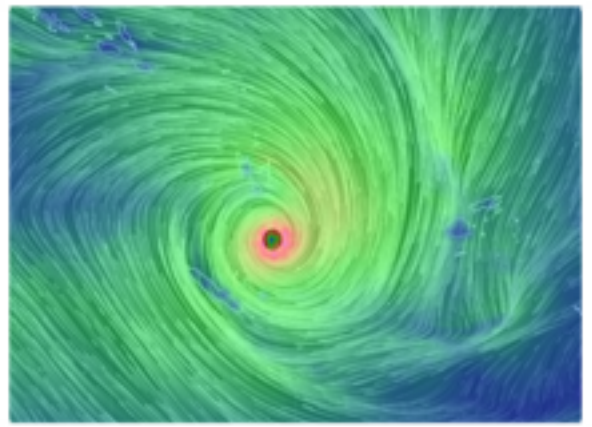

Quilts for Vanuatu

To all New Zealand Quilters



MAIL 6: 30.04.15

Greetings to all the Quilters who produced the 741 quilts for Vanuatu. I arrived back yesterday from a most memorable trip with P&O. You may have seen the NZ Herald online interview on Monday the 20th, filmed on Auckland wharf.

I had kept 18 quilts in my cabin and the rest were in the ships hold. On the second sea day I arranged to set up a display in the atrium where passengers could come by, see the quilts and I could tell them a little about quilting and this project. A lovely moment came when one passenger, Christine from Otaki came by and said she had contributed a quilt to the collection. Then Vanuatuan staff members came by and told me of their children, their parents and other family members having homes destroyed. I invited each of them to choose a quilt to send to their families. It was a very moving 2 hours as crew contacted their Vanuatuan friends around the ship and they arrived in the atrium one after another. I have so many lovely photos I have set up a Facebook page to show you: "**Quilts for Vanuatu**"

The next event was on the wharf in Vila last Saturday. All the Aid was unloaded onto the wharf and I was introduced to the Government Member Mr. Jotham Napat responsible for the cyclone recovery. He asked me to convey thanks to you on behalf of the Government of Vanuatu.

Mr Napat said most of the Quilts would be sent to the southern colder islands where the devastation is greatest.

I was then asked to give a quilt to each of the men performing on the wharf in traditional costume.

With the formalities over, I headed off to the home of Rachel a crew member who had invited me to visit her village. As we drove there I noticed piles of tree trunks and branches which had been cut and dragged off the road, many sheets of roofing iron were being held on the roofs with sand bags. We crossed a bridge that had been damaged and reduced to a single lane. As we entered the village I saw 2 large UNICEF tents, initially these had been emergency housing, now they are used as a school. Arriving at the Village of Mele, around a dozen women were awaiting our arrival. Lunch had been prepared, cooked in a style similar to a hangi. There was chicken, taro, rice and a coconut soup. This village had been flooded and everything washed away or destroyed by mud.

One woman showed me 2 manual sewing machines now destroyed by mud. She told me she had previously sewn clothing for other locals but could no longer earn money this way.

Then I gave each of the Women and many of the children a quilt, and some of the little dresses. It was very moving. The brightness and beauty of our quilts contrasted dramatically with the poverty of the little houses.

People were so appreciative. One woman made a speech on behalf of the group, the woman all stood to sing a hymn and say a prayer then every woman came forward and kissed me and said thank you. In my brief speech I said the Quilts are not only to keep the bodies warm but to warm the soul and so you know we care.

I was moved to tears and feel so privileged that you, the Quilters of New Zealand, trusted me to take your beautiful work to the women of Vanuatu.

Please go to the Facebook page "Quilts for Vanuatu" where I have put a good range of photos.

Thank you all once again, you contributed to warming the bodies and souls of so many families.

Best wishes
Caroline Mason