



Monday 04 May 2020

For Immediate Release

MEDIA STATEMENT

Papua New Guinea and Bougainville remains at Stage 2: Containment Level of the COVID-19. The Bougainville Health Response Team remains vigilant in tracking the global trend of the virus and to ensure that the preventive measures are strongly emphasized across Bougainville.

People's health and safety is of utmost importance and the Bougainville Health Response Team is working tirelessly to ensure that the 300,000 plus population of Bougainville are protected from the COVID-19.

On a global level, the numbers continue to rise, and therefore the global risk assessment remains very high according to the World Health Organization. In Bougainville, the Office of the Controller and the Health Response Team are making decisions based on expert health advice and the risk assessment of the World Health Organization.

BOUGAINVILLE UPDATE

Health – This week, the Health Response Team, which includes the surveillance teams, clinical management team, risk communications teams and laboratory teams are also doing regional visits. This is part of the routine surveillance exercise of the Health Response Plan.

The country's number of COVID-19 cases still remains at eight (8) with no new cases being reported, however, there are samples that continue to be taken from persons under investigation (PUIs) nationwide and in Bougainville.

In Bougainville, there is a rumor that has been spreading about a case in Arawa. This is NOT true - there is no case of COVID-19 anywhere in Bougainville.

The person in Arawa is being investigated for severe acute respiratory infection (SARI) and influenza like illness (ILI). The patient is stable and the health team in Arawa will collect samples this week as part of our routine surveillance activities.

In terms of the health facilities, the quarantine facility at the YC Hall in Buka, North Bougainville continues to progress well and reports received from the contractor states that all work should be complete by Wednesday this week. The Suhin Isolation facility is 70 per cent complete.

Law and Order – In North Bougainville, the enforcement of the SOE is progressing well with road checks and traffic patrols continuing along the main highways. Police personnel continue to monitor and ensure people are complying with the social distancing requirements.

The Controller and his team have been conducting district visits over the past few weeks to meet with COVID-19 District Teams. On Sunday 03 May 2020, the team visited Kunua District however, there was no District Team established for the Kunua District and they met with community leaders instead. The overall response received from the meeting indicated the need for more awareness on the COVID-19 and also on the emergency orders that are in force.

An important appeal is made to Constituency Members, ward members and community governments, to organize and lead awareness activities to people in rural areas.

It is through awareness that people will understand the implications of COVID-19 and also understand what the state of emergency is for and therefore the public can easily adhere to the emergency orders.

In South and Central Bougainville, the police patrol of borders is continuing, however, capacity issues have limited full patrol of border posts. Despite this, there were no sightings of illegal movements across the border reported over the past 2 days.

Under the State of Emergency, the sale and consumption of alcohol has been banned, however there are a number of shop owners who are still selling alcohol. A public appeal is made again, firstly to the shop owners to adhere to the orders of the liquor ban, and also to the general public to assist the police by reporting those who are found to be selling alcohol. The police will be investigating who these shop owners are and will be dealt with accordingly.

Government – The Deputy Controller for the SOE and the Acting Chief Secretary has made a strong call to public servants not to submit any claims for allowances for any unauthorized work done during the State of Emergency.

The Deputy Controller explained that only those public servants who were recalled (essential workers) and authorized to work during the emergency period will be compensated. There will be no unnecessary payment of allowances to individuals/groups who worked without authorization from the Controller.

Regarding resumption of normal duties for the Bougainville Public Service, all public servants in Bougainville will be required to resume official duties this week as soon as the Controller issues the new emergency orders for the Bougainville Public Service. The resumption of duties is expected to happen on Wednesday 06th May 2020.

In terms of awareness at the constituency level, there have been ongoing concerns raised by communities across Bougainville, especially those in rural areas about the lack of awareness being done on the COVID-19 and the emergency orders. While the government had taken the

Constituency approach, the response being received from communities indicates a lack of awareness. Therefore the Deputy Controller is making an appeal to ABG Constituency Members to provide reports to the Joint Ministerial Taskforce for COVID-19 and/or the Parliamentary Emergency Committee about their respective constituency awareness activities.

CALLS TO ACTION

The Office of the Controller acknowledges all health workers including doctors and nurses, the police and other law enforcement agencies and public servants for the efforts put in so far with the response.

We must all be supportive of one another during this time. It is important that we show care and support for our families and neighbors. Do not stigmatize or tease someone who is ill. Stigmatizing can lead to people being shy or scared to seek health care immediately and this will not help in our efforts to prevent the spread of the COVID-19.

Share the correct information amongst your families and communities, and if you want more information, see your local community health worker, or call the Bougainville Health Response Team Hotline number 74460830.

And finally, remember to practice the Five Preventive Measures at all times:

- Maintaining social distance (a minimum of 1.5 meters)
- Frequently washing hands using clean running water and soap, or alcohol-based hand rub
- When coughing and sneezing, cover mouth and nose with flexed elbow or tissue — throw away used tissue immediately and wash hands
- Avoid close contact with anyone who has fever and cough
- If you have fever, cough, or difficulty breathing, stay at home (self-isolate) to protect others and call the Bougainville Health Response Team Hotline Number 74460830.

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<http://www.abg.gov.pg/index.php/news/read/bougainville-soe-media-statement3>