



Wednesday 06 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.

According to the World Health Organization, the global risk assessment is still very high.

Bougainville Update

Health – ABG Health Department Secretary Clement Totavun, has reaffirmed the focus of the Bougainville emergency response and that is to ensure that the virus does not enter Bougainville borders, and to prevent any potential hum-to-human transmission.

The Health Secretary further announced that the World Health Organization has approved the use of GeneXpert testing for the COVID-19. Bougainville currently has two GeneXpert testing facilities at the Buka and Arawa General Hospital respectively. According to the World Health Organization, the GeneXpert machines will make testing simpler and shortens the turnaround time for results to 3 to 4 hours.

This now means that Bougainville will have the capacity to do its own testing for COVID-19 within the region. The Health Secretary confirmed that the Government of Australia and the World Health Organization has provided procurement support to PNG for the GeneXpert testing kits and cartridges. This support will also include test kits and cartridges for Bougainville.

The Health Secretary thanked the Bougainville Health Response Team and police personnel who are implementing the COVID-19 response efforts and appealed to the general public to work together with these teams by adhering to the emergency orders, especially that of maintaining social distancing.

The Health Secretary confirmed that work on the Triage, quarantine and isolation facilities are progressing well and work should be completed within the respective timeframes.

SOE - The State of Emergency Controller for Bougainville and Chief of Bougainville Police Service, Francis Tokura, has issued new emergency orders effective as of Tuesday 06 May 2020,

for the commencement of schools and the resumption of duties for the Bougainville Public Service.

According to the new orders, all schools in Bougainville except for tertiary institutions shall resume classes on Monday, 11 May 2020.

The orders also state that all schools are required to install hand-washing stations with soap and water in strategic areas of the school with clear information to students on how to wash hands properly. If possible, hand sanitizers are to be placed in each classroom and at the entrance and exits of the schools and near lunchrooms and toilets.

The Bougainville Department of Education has been directed to ensure that all schools are in compliance with these new orders and health guidelines and requirements. A copy of the **ABG Department of Education Checklist for Protocols in Schools** will be made available to all schools by the Department.

The Bougainville Public Service has also been issued a new order for the recommencement of normal public service duties starting Wednesday 06 May 2020.

All government offices must ensure a 'new normal' safe workplace arrangements which are consistent with the Health, Safety and Hygiene procedures for the work environment. All departments will also be required to monitor staff during work hours to enable tracing in the event that an employee shows symptoms of COVID-19 and are tested positive.

The 'new normal' procedures from the National Department of Personnel Management shall be adopted and applied for government offices in Bougainville.

With travel in and out of Bougainville, all flights are still restricted to only medical equipment only and other essential materials as approved by the Controller.

Commercial flights will only be allowed after the required quarantine, isolation and triage facilities in Bougainville are fully completed. Once these facilities are completed, all passengers coming into Bougainville must be quarantined at the designated facilities.

The Controller will also be issuing new orders for the safe conduct of the ABG 2020 General Elections soon. He clarified that there will be some strict restrictions for the conduct of all electoral related activities to ensure that the ABG 2020 general elections are conducted in a safe, credible and transparent manner in this emergency period.

All bakeries, fast food outlets and restaurants will be inspected by Health authorities to ensure all are in compliance with standard health regulations before the Controller will review the orders to have them reopened.

Government – Deputy Controller and Acting Chief Secretary, Thomas Raivet, confirmed that the Bougainville Public Service resumed normal work duties today under the ‘new normal’. The ‘new normal’ means that all public servants are to maintain social distancing at all government offices, and to refrain from having unnecessary congregations before or after work.

The Deputy Controller has given a stern warning to public servants who are submitting claims for allowances for work done during the emergency period. He explained that public servants who have not been authorized by the Controller to work during the emergency period should not be claiming for any form of allowance payment for working during the emergency period.

Meanwhile, the Bougainville Public Service stands ready to support the 2020 ABG elections, by organizing public servants as volunteers in two main groups to support the conduct of elections, and the other to support the police with security during elections.

Following public concerns raised about the constituency approach taken to implement COVID-19 awareness activities, the Deputy Controller acknowledged the good efforts of the ABG Member for Taonita-Teop for his outstanding initiatives in his constituency approach. The Taonita-Teop Constituency has demonstrated excellent transparency and accountability in their constituency approach with the Member providing all funds to his community government to implement their community programs with financial reports submitted for accountability.

The Atolls Constituency has also shown similar initiative with strong community ownership. The Nuguria community has gone a step further using their own initiative to identify islands for quarantine and isolation for their people. It is a positive approach that shows strong community leadership and action in the best interest of the people.

CALLS TO ACTION

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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