

Media Statement – Minister for Commerce, Industries, Labour and Immigration – COVID-19 Border Control

Further to the information provided by my colleague, Honourable Minister Mua, I would like to briefly update the public on the actions that have been taken in relation to immigration controls in response to the COVID-19 global outbreak.

Two Travel Advisories have been jointly issued by Honourable Minister Mua and myself in recent weeks. Both had the aim to strengthen Solomon Islands border control with respect to protection of our population from the potential entry of the Corona Virus – COVID-19.

The most recent Joint Travel Advisory which was issued on the 27th of February, restricts entry to Solomon Islands by passengers who have travelled from or transited through countries where COVID-19 has been reported. These countries are listed as 'Restricted Countries' in the Travel Advisory and include the Peoples' Republic of China (mainland China), the Republic of Korea, Japan, Singapore, Italy, Hong Kong (SAR), Thailand, Iran, Chinese Taipei and Macau.

Any person who has travelled from or through any country that is listed as restricted, at any time during the 14 days immediately prior to the day of arrival of that person in Solomon Islands, will be turned away and denied entry to Solomon Islands.

This is indeed a drastic measure, but is absolutely necessary if we are to reduce the potential for COVID-19 to enter the country.

Please note that the list of 'Restricted Countries' is likely to expand in the days and weeks to come due to the ever-evolving nature of the global COVID-19 outbreak and the required public health response.

In addition to the measures that I have just outlined with regard to restrictions of entry on arrival, pre-arrival screening measures have also been put in place. These include but are not limited to:

- Pilots and ships Masters being required to report the presence of any sick person on board with symptoms or signs of flue, runny nose, fever, headache, chest pain, difficulty breathing or rash, on arrival so that the Ministry of Health can ensure that any such passengers are clinically assessed and quarantined;

- All incoming travellers must complete both a Travellers' Public Health Declaration card and provide full details of their place of stay, travel itinerary and personal contact details while they are in Solomon Islands, upon arrival in Solomon Islands.

Additional protective Immigration measures include the requirement for all shipping only to enter Solomon Islands through either the Honiara or Noro Ports where Customs and Immigration staff will ensure compliance with the requirements of the Joint Travel Advisory.

In support of the comments made by my colleague, Honourable Dickson Mua, Minister for Health and Medical Services, as Minister for Commerce, Industries, Labour and Immigration, I must stress the importance of maintaining strict border controls if we are to prevent the entry of the Corona Virus into our country. Whilst the measures that have been introduced may cause some individuals inconvenience, the restrictions that have been put in place have been introduced in the interest of protecting the population of Solomon Islands during this global public health outbreak. Travellers are asked to respect the restrictions that have been put in place and not take out any frustrations that they may have on Immigration staff.

The Ministry of Commerce, Industries, Labour and Immigration is 100 percent behind the Ministry of Health and Medical Services in the actions taken to date and proposed in response to the COVID-19 global outbreak and as Minister, I offer my Ministry's full support.

Thank you.

Honourable Clezy Rore, MP,

Minister for Commerce, Industries, Labour and Immigration