



## **Environmental Health Division**

Ministry of Health and Medical Services

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### **MINISTRY OF HEALTH JOINT FOOD SAFETY PREPAREDNESS AND AWARENESS ASSESSMENT AS PART OF COVID-19 PREPAREDNESS.**

#### **Media Release**

28<sup>th</sup> April 2020

Honiara, Solomon Islands – As part of our ongoing preparedness against the COVID-19 a joint Food Establishment Assessment is currently underway for all food outlets such as restaurants, snack bars and café's including shops, food processing and water factories, and so forth.

The Ministry of Health through the food safety Unit, Environmental Health Division conducted a food safety assessment this week, as ongoing activities, and also part of the COVID 19 preparedness emergency response, within state of emergency zone

According to the Chief Health Inspector - National Food Safety unit, Mrs Patricia Soqilo says, three teams of two Environmental Health Officials from the National Environmental Health Division, Honiara City Council (HCC) and Guadalcanal Province will be conducting this assessment, covering food facilities in the East, Central and West areas of the State of Emergency (SOE) zones.

While it is highly unlikely that people can contract COVID-19 from food and food packaging, there are practices in public facilities such as food establishments (restaurants, kai bars) that can potentially facilitate transmission of infection if preventative measures are not followed and controls measures are not been put in place.

Mrs Soqilo says, "The assessment aims to assess how well the food establishment owners are prepared and to find out if the public facilities and workers have current knowledge & observe practices to mitigate the risk of COVID-19 in their respective workplaces. It also aims to raise the awareness for the food workers and owners to COVID-19 and apprise them of public health measures they need to put into place for responding to COVID-19.

#### **The SCOPE of the assessment covers areas within the SOE zones**

- Restaurants assessments to every food premise in State of Emergency (SOE) zone- Alligator creek to Poha specifically targeting the following aspects;
  - Availability of adequate potable water
  - Good Hygiene Practices (Handwashing facilities (procedures), soap, sanitizers, single use paper towels are in place
  - Cleaning and sanitizing facilities & supplies (Procedures, detergents, soap and sanitizers etc. in place)

- Adherence to recommended physical and social distance policies and practices in food establishments
- Collect water and food samples when required
- Follow up if required

She continues to say, COVID -19 assessment seeks to inform food services of the Food Safety existing laws governing their responsibility to maintain good hygiene practices and the Emergency declaration regulation put in place to prevent spread of COVID-19. She further added that at present we do not have any reported COVID-9 case in Solomon Islands and it is the time that we prepare ourselves to mitigate the threat of importation and transmission of virus and at the same time put into practices that will support minimizing social and economic impact of the COVID-19.

The assessment is organised by the MHMS as part of the COVID-19 preparedness and awareness raising in our community in collaboration with the Honiara City Council, Guadalcanal Provinces and HEOC.

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