

## LOCKDOWN STILL NOT REQUIRED

The Government this week has repeated that a lockdown will not be enforced since the covid-19 patient has been isolated to prevent further spread into the community.

The announcement was made to clarify public concerns on why a lockdown is not enforced following the country's first covid-19 positive.

The reason was based on health assessments that confirmed that the virus is contained in isolation, and have not spread to the community.

Risk assessments for all frontline workers involved in airport operations, transportation including St John Ambulances, quarantine, triage, testing and isolation have also been conducted which included COVID-19 testing and completion of a set of questions to determine if there was breach of protocols by health workers that could potentially lead to spread and community transmission.

From the assessments, it was concluded that not all frontline workers have breached any infection, prevention and control measures and guidelines on the use of personal protective equipment and as such, risk of contracting the virus remains low.

Seven public health officers who are quarantined at Airport Motel also did not breach any IPC or PPE protocols when collecting samples from the students.

However since the nature of collecting samples involves close contact that is less than a meter, MHMS took prudent measures to provide alternative accommodation to them to prevent any spread in the community. All these seven persons have been tested negative for COVID-19.

Also about the lockdown, the government would also like to explain that the lockdown of capital, Honiara, during the simulation exercises was due to the scenario in which the exercise was conducted.

It involved sick persons who were brought to health clinics and on to NRH triage from the COMMUNITY, as such it involved community spread or transmission scenario, which is not the case with our current situation.

The current case of our country's first positive COVID-19 case closely resembles the second exercise held last month (September) where the scenario included COVID-19 first detected in quarantine station and brought to NRH triage and isolation. In this particular exercise if one can recall, a lockdown was not enforced. This is the exactly the same situation that we have with our first COVID-19 case.

Nevertheless, there is still a possibility that a lockdown will be advised should the virus finds its way into the community or beyond quarantine, isolation, and the government through the Ministry of Health is closely monitoring the situation and is taking all possible steps to ensure that the virus does not enter into our community.

We also need the support of our students who are in quarantine stations to make sure that they do not breach quarantine rules, ensure physical distancing, and be honest to discuss with health monitoring staff if they have any symptoms. They should also practice hand hygiene as advised by the health team.

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