

## SOLOMON ISLANDS GOVERNMENT



### GOVERNMENT COMMUNICATION UNIT

**MEDIA RELEASE**

**23-03-2020GH**

#### **SOLOMON ISLANDS CUSTOMS TIGHTENS MOVEMENT OF VESSELS INTO THE COUNTRY**

The Solomon Islands Government through its Customs Division has tightened vessels entry procedures in the country as part of measures to contain COVID-19 from the country.

Solomon Islands currently has recorded no confirmed cases of the virus but authorities are intensifying all travel restrictions to contain any possible outbreak.

In its latest advisory on incoming vessels including Cargo vessels, Ore vessels, Bulk carriers, Tank ships, Supply and Bunker vessels, Logging vessels, Fishing vessels, Pleasure craft, Yachts and Super yachts, Cruise liners and other marine and scientific vessels, the Government has directed that all arriving and departing vessels may elect to clear formalities in Honiara or at Noro ports.

The restrictions further prohibits all Health, Customs or Immigration clearance services at any other location, including at suffrage wharves.

The latest advisory directs that Health Officials shall be first to board any vessel or craft to clear vessels from a health perspective and if an all-clear for medical assessment is given by Health Officials, then, Immigration and Customs shall board the vessel for subsequent clearance of cargo, passengers and crew.

These measures have been taken by the Comptroller of Customs, Mr Jim Sutton in line with the Coronavirus Steering Committee Joint Travel Advisory 4.

“Accordingly, I have issued an updated Customs Directive effective from the date of this Directive that should be read in conjunction with Joint Travel Advisory 4,” Mr Sutton said.

Under the updated measures, if Health authorities do NOT grant clearance for any passenger or crew, the entire vessel shall be deemed to have been placed into immediate quarantine until such health clearance or condition is complied with and the determined time frame has passed.

Further to that, Vessel Masters must report any illness on board to Health authorities at the time of boarding.

If any crew member or passenger has joined a vessel (or disembarked due to health reasons) en-route to Solomon Islands, the master must ensure that person's prior travel history is clearly documented.

Even if that person boarded the vessel in a non-affected country, the prior travel history will determine the commencement of the 14 day period of quarantine for the entire voyage, regardless of where the voyage originally commenced.

The advisory further directs that all inward Noro vessels placed under quarantine shall immediately sail under yellow Quarantine Flag to Honiara Port and must lie at anchor at sea and complete any quarantine time period and comply with any condition set by Health Authorities.

Under these upgraded measures, Supplies to quarantined vessels can be made during a quarantine period, however Masters must ensure that suppliers are not permitted to come on board the vessel.

Furthermore, Masters shall ensure no temporary visitors come aboard a quarantined vessel. This measures shall be strictly enforced with relevant penalties for noncompliance.

The Royal Solomon Island Police Force will be monitoring compliance Cruise Ships and Yachts while Yachts can only enter the country if seeking shelter from dangerous and inclement weather conditions. Any yacht using this provision will be quarantined for 14 days calculated under article 7.

Cruise liners will not be permitted into the country for the next 90 days - until 20<sup>th</sup> June 2020.

All shipping agents should ensure forward vessel voyage details and crew and passenger details are provided to Health/Customs/Immigration as early as possible to help mitigate risk.

At this point in time, the presence of Coronavirus has not been confirmed in SI, although there are some persons whom have been placed under precautionary quarantine.

These measures shall remain in force until further notice.

In emergency situations only, decided individually by the Steering Committee, variations to the 14 day quarantine period may be permitted – for example, supply by fuel tanker when local national supplies are determined by the Committee to be critically low.

“Urgent” General cargo and “perishables” will not be accepted as an eligible excuse to relax our vigilance and will be subject to the quarantine period,” Mr Sutton explained.

The time limit for quarantine is 14 clear days at sea at the time of arrival in the Solomon Islands before clearance will be given. Vessels arriving within the 14 day window must remain at

anchor / offshore until the 14 day period has elapsed and Health clearance given even if coming from a non-affected country.

ENDS///

For further information, refer customs website [www.customs.gov.sb](http://www.customs.gov.sb)