



MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND MEDICAL SERVICES

STIGMA CAN INCREASE SPREAD OF COVID-19

Media Release

FOR AN IMMEDIATE RELEASE

30TH March 2020

Honiara, Solomon Islands - COVID-19 is a disease caused by a virus and this virus can infect anyone. It does not choose who it wants to infect.

No one is to be blamed for getting COVID-19. From its rapid spread across the world, we have seen that COVID-19 does not respect borders. It does not care where you are from, how rich or poor you are, or about your age, race, religion or gender.

Let's avoid labelling people as victims of COVID-19: for many people the illness is mild, like the flu and most will recover. Nobody wants to be known as a COVID-19 victim.

Many people have been stigmatized and discriminated against even though they have not had COVID-19.

People have been stigmatized to COVID-19 because:

1. Of fear and the many unknowns related to this disease.
2. The disease is new, and we still don't know a lot about it.
3. It is easy to associate the fear to other people or ethnic groups.

If we do not stop stigma, it will encourage the spread of COVID-19 in our communities because:

1. It will cause fear to those who are sick, and they will hide their illness to avoid discrimination.
2. It will stop people from seeking health care immediately.
3. It will discourage people from adopting healthy behaviour and advice.

We all face a common threat, the coronavirus, COVID-19. To fight it we must work together, united as a country. We must show solidarity with the vulnerable population – (the elderly, and the sick).

We need to create a supportive environment where COVID-19 and its impact can be discussed and addressed openly, respectfully, honestly, and guided by the science.

Stop stigma, in our communities. Listen to the right authorities for correct information and respect the work that Health and other Government Ministries are doing in preparing and responding to COVID-19.

If you develop a fever or cough or shortness of breath, call the public health surveillance team immediately: 23 650 or 752 2202, Free toll 115.

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For media queries contact the Dian Maggie Row media officer, on email drow@moh.gov.sb or phone: 25205 or mobile: 7489241 or follow us on www.solomons.gov.sb or Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/officialmhmsi/>