



**SOLOMON ISLANDS  
MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND MEDICAL SERVICES  
P. O. BOX 349, HONIARA, SOLOMON ISLANDS**

**MHMS: COVID-19 Testing Machines, Operational**

The Ministry of Health and Medical Services (MHMS) would like to correct statements recently made in the media that a COVID-19 testing machine donated by one of our partners is not yet operational due to calibration, technical and language issues.

In the month of May and April, MHMS received two COVID-19 testing machines called the qPCR (quantitative polymerase chain reaction) machines, each donated by People's Republic of China (PRC) and the Australian Government. Both machines have been pre-calibrated by their manufacturing companies prior to sending them over to Solomon Islands and have passed quality control checks at the National Referral Hospital (NRH) Molecular Lab.

Following the testing carried out at the NRH Molecular lab; both machines have satisfied internal and external quality controls provided by Victorian Infectious Diseases Reference Laboratory (VIDRL) in Australia. Selected samples sent to VIDRL for validation and quality assurance confirms the quality assurance standards requirement. As such, both machines have fulfilled quality assurance requirements.

Repatriates during May were tested using both machines as part of the quarantine protocol including suspected cases, with most of the tests performed using the China donated qPCR machine since the machine has 3000 test kits available to be used with.

Both machines however require another type of kit called extraction kit to perform their tasks. Extraction kits procured from Beijing Genomics Institute (BGI) which should have also accompanied the (BGI) qPCR donated by the PRC embassy could not be found as such an alternative extraction kit that was available called "pure link" was used instead with the China donated qPCR. Quality checks conducted showed acceptable results.

While MHMS is working closely with the relevant partner to locate the missing extraction kits, it had recently procured 1000 extraction kits that arrived on 26<sup>th</sup> of June 2020. Additional 300 kits have also been donated by the Government of New Zealand, which arrived on 29 June 2020. MHMS will continue to ensure that both qPCR machines have the necessary accessories to continue conducting COVID-19 tests.

The release of all 178 May repatriates in just two weeks is enough evidence of both machines as operational. If the machines have technical, calibration and language issues, the molecular laboratory at NRH would not be able to conduct any COVID-19 test.

In the Pacific only Fiji, New Caledonia, Guam and recently Solomon Islands perform COVID-19 tests with qPCR machine. WHO rates qPCR machines as one of the most sensitive and accurate methods for detecting, tracking and studying COVID-19. These machines have been the primary method for confirming COVID-19 cases globally.

On this note, MHMS would like to assure everyone not to panic nor worry, as all the passengers scheduled to arrive this week will undergo COVID-19 testing both for any suspects and to fulfill the quarantine protocols before released to reunite with their families.

MHMS continues to remain grateful to its donors and partners for their assistance in the country's efforts to remain COVID-19 free and more especially for the capabilities to detect presence of COVID-19 and capacity building to contain and control possible entry and outbreak of COVID-19 in the country.

Solomon Islands continue to be among the only 12 countries in the world to date that maintains a COVID-19 free status and in order for us to keep it that way, it requires solidarity, unity and combined efforts from everyone. This is the only and the most effective way forward to come out of this pandemic triumphantly.

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