

SOLOMON ISLANDS GOVERNMENT



GOVERNMENT COMMUNICATION UNIT

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SOLOMON ISLANDS HIGH COMMISSIONER THANKS FIJI GOVERNMENT

The Solomon Islands High Commissioner to Fiji, Mr William Soaki has thanked the Government of Fiji for authorizing the permit and clearance for the Solomon Airlines A320 aircraft to repatriate Solomon Islands Nationals who were stranded there for more than two months.

A statement from the High Commission Office in Suva on Friday 29 May said High Commissioner Soaki has acknowledged the Fiji Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Fiji Civil Aviation Department, Fiji Ministry of Health & Medical Services, Fiji Police, Fiji Military for availing their personnel to facilitate airport protocols and COVID 19 standard procedures prior to the departure.

The stranded nationals finally flew back home on Wednesday 27 May 2020. This was after the Government of the Republic of Fiji gave its clearance for Solomon Airlines to operate a chartered recovery flight to Nadi International Airport.

The flight arrived into Nadi International Airport at around 3.40pm having airlifted Fijian Nationals and other citizens from Port Vila, Vanuatu.

The majority of the stranded citizens travelled to Fiji in early March to attend the USP and FNU Graduation ceremonies that were eventually cancelled due to COVID 19 pandemic, and subsequently effective implementation of border restrictions and lockdown in Lautoka and Suva.

The Solomon Islands Government had also made similar travel restrictions since the COVID-19 virus was announced as a global pandemic by the World Health Organisation (WHO) on 11 March 2020. Since then, several measures were taken by the government to ensure containment, prevention and preparedness of the COVID-19 response was set up, including frontline workers trained, quarantine centers readied and equipment and kits available and accessible for testing.

After more than two months of being in Fiji, these stranded nationals were able to return home to Honiara, together with other returning citizens and resident permit holders. The total passengers that departed from Fiji were 104, along with the body of late Brian Abaita, a final year student of the University of South Pacific.

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All the repatriated passengers have undergone a mandatory 28 days quarantine requirement as a precautionary preventive measure to halt this infectious COVID-19 spreading to the rest of the population.

The Solomon Islands High Commission in Suva acknowledged the support of the Solomon Islands COVID 19 Committee, Solomon Airlines and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and External Trade. "IUMI TUGEDA AGAINST COVID-19"

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