

**OFFICE OF THE CONTROLLER**

**PNG COVID-19 National Pandemic Response**

Joint Agency Task Force

Media Statement - Wednesday 30th June 2021

**PNG considers ban on international flights as new COVID-19 Delta variant spreads to over 92 countries**

Police Commissioner and Controller of the PNG COVID-19 National Pandemic Response Mr David Manning said the country is considering banning all international flights in and out of Papua New Guinea following the rapid spread of the COVID-19 Delta variant.

The Delta variant of COVID-19 (also known as B16172), which was first detected in India in October last year, is becoming the dominant variant of the disease worldwide. It is spreading rapidly across the globe and is now present in at least 92 countries including Australia, Indonesia, Singapore and even Pacific Island nation Fiji.

Mr Manning said the National Control Centre as a responsible organization tasked with the country’s COVID-19 response is closely monitoring developments in countries around the world including Australia and Fiji.

“If necessary we will consider closing our borders and banning all flights into and out of the country. We are aware that COVID-19 has affected our economy since the first case was recorded more than a year ago but we would rather be proactive than reactive.

“At this point we have proposed a number of intervention strategies to the government such as the ban of international flights for its consideration,” Mr Manning said.

Other options being proposed to the government include:

 Increasing mandatory quarantine period to 21 days;

 Testing to be done on day 1, 7, 14 and 21 (day of release from quarantine);

 Genome sequencing to be undertaken as well as PCR testing to ascertain or determine which variant is in the country; and

 Mandatory tracking device for all persons.

“Papua New Guinea has a real risk due to the high vaccine hesitancy which exposes the majority of our people to the virus and leaves us without a lot of options,” Mr Manning said.

Mr Manning repeated calls for citizens to be vaccinated. He said being vaccinated will offer some level of protection from this highly contagious variant but people must still continue to wear face masks, maintain social distance, use hand sanitisers or wash hands regularly and avoid crowds.

“Citizens must also be responsible during this period. If they have not been vaccinated then they must do so. This is important if we as a country are going to defeat the pandemic,” Mr Manning said.

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Chief Superintendent Dominic D. Kakas, BEM, DPS

COVID-19 Media & Public Information

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