



16 July 2020

## **Bad weather hampers search for six people missing at sea in Temotu Province**

Continuous bad weather in the Temotu Province is hampering efforts by the Royal Solomon Islands Police Force and members of the local community in the search for six people who been missing while travelling in an outboard motorised boat (OBM) from Kala Bay on Santa Cruz Island to the Reef Islands on 11 July 2020.

Police at the Lata Police Station only received a report on the matter on 13 July 2020.

“A combined team of Police and Medical officers at Lata were able to conduct a search on Tuesday 14 July and Wednesday 15 July but still no sighting of any OBM. Since then the weather conditions were not suitable for the search to continue. There were still no reports from relatives in the Reef islands.”

Provincial Police Commander (PPC) Temotu Province Superintendent James Toaki says, “There were six passengers, three male and three female, on board the OBM powered by a 40 horse power engine. The passengers included two registered nurses working at the Manuopo Clinic in the Reef Islands. All the passengers were from Manuopo Village. They were returning from Lata after going there for banking purposes.”

PPC Superintendent Toaki explains, “We are still experiencing bad weather here in Temotu Province including strong winds and high seas with continuous rain at times with cloudy periods all over all the islands in the province. Unfortunately this bad weather means we cannot go out to sea and search for the missing people.”

“Since the OBM failed to reach its destination there has been no reports from the people living along the coast lines of any sightings of the OBM and the passengers on board. Police here at Lata have contacted relatives in the Reef Islands and advised them to report any sightings as we continue to be on standby should anything is reported.”

PPC Superintendent Toaki appeals to people in Temotu Province to take all precautions during this time of bad weather.

“Please assess the weather situation before embarking on your trip between the islands. The weather situation can change quickly so check with the Solomon Islands Met Service or listen to SIBC for the weather forecast before embarking on your trip. If you are not too sure about the weather then stay safe and do not go out to sea until the weather situation has cleared.”

PPC Superintendent Toaki adds, “OBM skippers must ensure they have the required safety equipment before travelling to other islands. Notify members of your family where you are going and what time you are expected to arrive at your destination.”

“Boat owners and skippers must always put the safety of your passengers first in order to save lives,” says PPC Superintendent Toaki.

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**Media inquiries**

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The Royal Solomon Islands Police Force (RSIPF) was established in 1954. It’s mission is ‘To provide a safe and peaceful Solomon Islands by strengthening relationships with the community’. The RSIPF strive to provide efficient and effective policing services for the Solomon Islands and expect RSIPF officers to adhere to the RSIPF values.

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