



29 March 2021

### **RSIPF needs help of communities to secure western border from COVID-19**

The Royal Solomon Islands Police Force (RSIPF) says it cannot successfully secure the western border with Papua New Guinea from the entry of COVID-19 without the help of communities in the Western, Choiseul and Malaita provinces living along Solomon Islands' side of the common border.

"The vast area covered by the western border with Papua New Guinea is too big compared to the resources and manpower of the RSIPF. The only way we can successfully protect our people in the western border from COVID-19 is for people living in the border region to assist frontline officers stop the movement of people across the common border. We can only keep the virus from entering our country from Bougainville if we all work together. Police cannot do it alone," said Deputy Commissioner, Juanita Matanga when she met with communities at Komaliae and Gaomae in the Shortland Islands on 24 March 2021 and Samanago, Tomua and Kariki on 25 March.

DC Matanga explained, "The RSIPF is concern following the increase in the number of COVID-19 cases in Papua New Guinea including neighbouring Bougainville. We have great concern for our good people because we want to avoid this virus entering our communities."

"I understand the reasons why our people are travelling across to Bougainville. It is important because of the inter-relationship our people with those on Bougainville and the trading of goods. People must be reminded that these are not normal times. We must stop crossing the common border until we are able to get the COVID-19 under control."

DC Matanga added, "We have to adhere to the COVID-19 State of Public Emergency regulations put in place by the Government and by the Ministry of Health and Medical Services for the safety of our nation."

"Communities have to be responsible and take ownership through changing their attitude. We are not in normal times. If we decide to ignore the regulations then we will face the consequences."

"I call on all communities in Shortland islands to please assist our police officers with information you may have about any member of your community who is still sneaking to the other side of the border to interact with Bougainvillians so we can stop any community transmission of the COVID-19 on our side of the common border," said DC Matanga.

Chiefs and elders of each community visited were very pleased with the concern of the RSIPF for the people in the Shortland Islands by sending Deputy Commissioner Matanga to visit them. They assured DC Matanga that they will continue to work closely with the police officers and will strengthen their community by-laws for the good of their families, relatives and the country as a whole.

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**For any media inquiries**

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The Royal Solomon Islands Police Force (RSIPF) was established in 1954. Its mission is 'To provide a safe, secure and peaceful Solomon Islands'. The RSIPF strive to provide efficient, capable and responsive policing service and expect RSIPF officers to adhere to the RSIPF values.

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