



JOINT MEDIA RELEASE

30 April 2020

It's here! qPCR machine arrives in Honiara

A qPCR (quantitative polymerase chain reaction) machine funded by the Australian Government arrived safely in Honiara last night (30 April). The new machine will enable COVID-19 tests to be done locally in country.

The procurement and delivery of the machine is the culmination of work and coordination between the Australian Government, World Health Organisation (WHO) and Ministry of Health and Medical Services (MHMS). Dedicated staff have worked tirelessly over the past few weeks to select and procure a high quality machine, and the associated COVID-19 testing components.

Australia is also funding works to upgrade the National Referral Hospital (NRH) molecular laboratory, which are underway and expected to be completed in two weeks. These works are required to ensure the existing laboratory meets appropriate safety and infection control standards, before COVID-19 testing can commence.

Australian High Commissioner Dr Lachlan Strahan said he was delighted the machine had arrived safely. Australia was pleased to fund its procurement at the request of the Solomon Islands Government.

“Our close partnership with WHO and MHMS has enabled Australia to respond to the need for a new machine, as well as fund the technical expertise and training required to run testing here. We are very happy to link up the NRH laboratory experts, with two world-leading epidemiological institutions in Australia, the Doherty Institute and the Menzies Institute,” he said.

“With some of the best medical scientists in the world, these institutes have been leading the research and diagnostic response to COVID-19 in Australia. They have also assisted some of our other neighbours, including Timor-Leste, to establish their COVID-19 testing. They are very well placed to support Solomon Islands achieve this capability.”

WHO Country Representative Dr Sevil Huseynova congratulated MHMS and the Australian Government on their achievements thus far.

“qPCR is one of the most sensitive and accurate laboratory methods for detecting, tracking and studying COVID-19, and therefore, is a critical investment for the country,” she said.

“Developing the testing capability goes hand in hand with the extensive training of MHMS surveillance teams to support improved patient care pathways. These pathways

will help ensure that the appropriate health services are available in the event of COVID cases that are more severe or critical.”

MHMS Permanent Secretary Pauline McNeil expressed gratitude for the support from Australia and WHO.

“Our teams have worked hard together to ensure this qPCR machine arrived,” she said.

“Having this equipment will enable the Ministry to do the testing capability locally, which is the key missing piece of our COVID-19 response strategy - to test, trace contacts and isolate in a timely manner.”

ENDS//



qPCR machine arrives in Honiara from Brisbane on Solomon Airlines last



Media enquiries

Australian High Commission Media Unit
Phone: 21561 ext 223 Email Grace.Williams@dfat.gov.au

WHO Media
Phone: 23406 Email: burggraafs@who.int

MHMS Media
Dian Row
Phone: 20830 Email: drow@moh.gov.sb