



Ministry of Communications & Information Technology

Office of the Minister

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MINISTER COMMENDS ICT SECTOR RESPONSE TO COVID-19 SET UP AT NATIONAL OPERATIONS CENTRE

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Minister for Information & Communication Technology, Hon. Timothy Masiu has commended the information and communication sector in the country for its swift response in establishing the communication set up at the National Operations Centre (NOC) in Waigani to help combat the threat of COVID-19 in the country.

“It’s the fourth day since the State of Emergency (SOE) was declared, and we already have had over 4.4 million Digicel-boosted SMS blasts, over 3, 000 calls, and almost 6, 000 visitors to the Department website (<http://covid19.info.gov.pg>) and almost 9, 000 followers and likes on its Facebook since.

“Digicel has also ensured that <http://covid19.info.gov.pg> and www.health.gov.pg are zero-rated website so Digicel phone customers can have free access to these sources of information, Mr Masiu said.

The Minister said he and his Department and the National Information & Communications Technology Authority (NICTA) had been regularly meeting with the ICT Operators since the Ministerial Committee on COVID19 was set up.

“We have been meeting on how best the sector can assist government efforts on combating the COVID-19 issue. As a result, the technical support we have had from the ICT Operators like Telikom (PNG), Digicel (PNG), and DataCo has been quite incredible.

“Telikom and Digicel have ensured NOC Call Centre configurations and related technical requirements were established in the shortest time possible, and both have provided volunteer staff to man this call centre. “DataCo has provided free Internet connectivity.

“In addition to extending the deadline for the deactivation of unregistered SIM cards by a further four (4) months to 31st July 2020, NICTA has also allocated the single national toll free number 1800 200 and additional toll free numbers for use by the National Department of Health, Royal PNG Constabulary, and the PNG Defence Force.

“The Mobile Network Operators have also cooperated in established a single national toll free

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number (1800 200) so our people can call in free to the call centre for assistance,” Mr Masiu said.

The Minister said he has been assured by the Operators that they would be ramping up their efforts in the coming days to ensure the NOC is fully operational and their technical back up support will be readily available when required.

“While there are daily press briefings by the Ministers for Health and Police respectively, we need to put out a lot more simplified awareness and information to our ordinary Papua New Guineans.

“I have asked the NOC media and awareness team, made up of the Departments of Health, Police and Prime Minister & NEC, and the NBC, to simplify and fast track awareness materials to our people.

“With a lot of misinformation and anxiety in our communities, we need to quickly step up our media and awareness efforts,” he said.

HON. TIMOTHY MASIU, MP
Minister for Information & Communication Technology

