



COVID-19 Omicron Variant Detected in Papua New Guinea

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Controller of the National Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic, David Manning, has announced that the Omicron variant of COVID-19 has been detected in Papua New Guinea.

Police Commissioner Manning said the arrival of the Omicron variant had been anticipated, and does not give any increased cause for concern so long as members of the public take appropriate precautions.

“The Government has been prepared for the arrival of the Omicron variant, just as we had been for the Delta Variant in the middle of last year, and now we are working to reduce the rate of spread,” Mr. Manning said.

“A male traveller who had departed from South Africa in December, and transited through London and Hong Kong, had initially tested negative and was not displaying any symptoms when he arrived in Papua New Guinea.

“A subsequent test was returned as positive and the man then went into quarantine.”

The Controller said given the period for the man's travel, it is not clear when or where he contracted the Omicron strain.

“Taking into consideration that the Omicron incubation period can be as little as three days, it is likely that that the man acquired COVID-19 after he departed South Africa.

“Contact tracing has been undertaken and no further close contact infections have been identified.

“But considering the timeline surrounding the man's movements, the Government is working from the assumption that the Omicron variant is now active in Papua New Guinea.

“The Omicron variant has already swept around the world and become the dominant strain of COVID-19, but the news is not all bad and this is not a time for panic.

“While it has been found that the Omicron variant spreads quicker than other strains, it has also been found to be less virulent, meaning that people are not getting as sick from Omicron as they were from Delta.

“However, if a person is not vaccinated their risk of serious illness or death from this variant remains very high.



“People who are vaccinated can still catch COVID-19, but are very unlikely to get seriously ill and will likely just have mild symptoms like a cold.


“The man who travelled from South Africa was vaccinated and he is now fully recovered.

“The key message for our people is to not panic, but to do the right thing and reduce the speed of the spread.

“Ultimately, everyone in the world is likely to get COVID-19 at some point in time. What we can do as a government and in our communities is to get vaccinated, practice social distancing and isolate as soon as we have symptoms.”

The World Health Organization declared Omicron as a variant of Concern of the 27th of November 2021 after it was detected in South Africa.

Since being first detected two years ago, almost 330 million people have contracted COVID-19 around the world, from which five and a half million people have been declared to have died from COVID-19 related complications.



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