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**PRESS RELEASE**

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## **A Partnership Response to COVID-19 in Western Province**

The Fly River Provincial Government (FRPG) is working in partnership with Ok Tedi Mining Limited (OTML) and PNG Sustainable Development Program Limited (SDP) in its efforts to tackle the COVID-19 challenge.

Western Provincial Administrator Robert Kaiyun is an enthusiastic supporter of this partnership approach.

“We acknowledge the work being undertaken by SDP and OTML in supporting our fight against the COVID-19 pandemic which is affecting our people in Western Province and PNG as a nation,” said Mr. Kaiyun.

Western Province Governor Taboi Awi Yoto has endorsed the establishment of a Provincial Task Force team, which is an inter-agency committee comprising health professionals, security forces, customs officers, the provincial administration and OTML.

Mr. Kaiyun said the aim of establishing the provincial task force was to bring together everyone to share information and develop a comprehensive understanding on how best to manage the COVID-19 threat in Western Province.

“Being a province that is host to two international borders with Australia and Indonesia, the risk of having COVID-19 entering the country is very high. As a result, we have stepped up our efforts through the provincial task force to immediately implement the National Emergency Preparedness Response Plan that outlines the various phases in managing the COVID-19 threat: Alert, Containment, Mitigation, and Recovery,” said Mr. Kaiyun.

“With the recent confirmation of three cases in the province, we have implemented phase 2 of the response plan – containment, as we await results from the samples sent to Australia for testing.”

The Fly River Provincial Government and the District Development Authorities (DDA) have allocated K5.5 million, some of which have been used to implement phase 1 of managing COVID-19. Fifty-one (51) teams have been deployed to conduct awareness on COVID-19 and manage the border areas to prevent people from moving across the borders, which remains a big challenge. Despite the efforts to man the borders, the taskforce team was reliably informed that people were still crossing the borders to conduct their activities.

“SDP is working closely with the Middle Fly COVID-19 Task Force team led by the Deputy Provincial Administrator Rupert Tabua in Balimo. They are supporting the Balimo Hospital with much-needed medical supplies and personal protective equipment, setting up a Triage Clinic at

the hospital, and mobilising the women in the community to sew over a 1000 home-made face masks for infection control and patient-care-at-home in the community. This is a good way forward in the fight against COVID-19 in the province,” said Mr. Kaiyun.



*Balimo Women in the Face Mask Project.*

He also reported that OTML is actively involved as a key member of the partnership. “They are using their procurement system to purchase PPE needed by people actively involved to protecting our people. They are also assisting with logistics and have put the Tabubil hospital on a “war footing” by developing special protocols to handle the situation should there be an influx of patients. They have also arranged isolation facilities to accommodate patients with the disease.”