Quarantine Idea Angers Positive People in the Pacific

September 2, 2008

People living with HIV in the Pacific Islands are calling out against comments made by heath expert Sitaleki Finau, MD, who suggested that it would be in the best interest of people living with HIV in the region to be quarantined from the rest of society, the Australian Broadcasting Corporation reports. Dr. Finau is the director of health on Niue, an island in the South Pacific Ocean.

According to Finau, prevention and awareness programs in the region are not stemming the spread of the virus in the Pacific, where he says about 13,000 people are HIV positive.

He said that one way to fight HIV stigma would be to isolate positive people in the Pacific to compounds or even an island, citing similar treatment for people carrying drug-resistant tuberculosis.

“What we need is for them to have some mechanism in which they can live without feeling the stigmatization, and that’s basically separating them away from the so-called people at risk, so that they can do their thing without having to look over their shoulder because they have a secret,” Finau said.

His statements have sparked outrage among positive people throughout the region.

“When it comes from someone like that, there really is no excuse,” said Maire Bopp-Dupont, an HIV-positive woman and founder of the Pacific Islands AIDS Foundation. “It is very well known today that the isolation of positive people is not a way forward and it doesn’t achieve anything.”

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