

## **Media Statement**

### **POFMA Office issues warning to woman for COVID-19 falsehood**

**Singapore – 31 March 2022:** The POFMA Office has issued a conditional warning to a 47-year-old Singaporean woman for making a statement knowing or having reason to believe that it is false and likely to harm the public interest.

On 14 August 2021, she made a false statement on Facebook that a three-year-old pre-schooler had passed away from COVID-19 at KK Women’s and Children’s Hospital (KKH), and that the death was deliberately not reported. The falsehood caused public alarm and ran counter to efforts to combat the COVID-19 virus. On 15 August 2021, a POFMA direction was issued to Facebook to carry a Correction Notice to all Facebook users in Singapore<sup>1</sup> to inform them of the falsehood. For facts of the case, please refer to the Factually article “Corrections and Clarifications Regarding Falsehoods on alleged death of three-year-old girl from COVID-19” at <https://www.gov.sg/article/factually150821>.

Investigations revealed that she had concocted the falsehood based on hearsay from an acquaintance. She was aware that no such death of a pre-schooler had been reported and yet went ahead to post the falsehood. Investigations also revealed that she had taken steps to evade identification by using a social media account with a fictitious name to post the false statement, and further falsely represented that she “[had] permission from [the] girl’s mummy to post on FB”.

Online falsehoods that sow public confusion affects lives and harms society. The Government takes a serious view of the deliberate communication of these false statements.

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<sup>1</sup> For facts of the case, please refer to the Factually article “Corrections and Clarifications Regarding Falsehoods on alleged death of three-year-old girl from COVID-19 at <https://www.gov.sg/article/factually150821>

After considering all aspects of the case, the POFMA Office issued a 24-month conditional warning to the woman. If she reoffends during this period, she can be prosecuted for the original crime. An offence under section 7 of the POFMA carries a fine of up to \$50,000, an imprisonment term of up to 5 years, or both.

Correction directions are POFMA's primary tools that require a notice next to the original post, with a link to Government's clarifications. The clarification sets out the facts without the original post being removed. Readers can therefore read both the original post and the facts.

Since POFMA took effect in Oct 2019, the majority of cases where POFMA has been invoked involve COVID-19 falsehoods. Statistics on POFMA cases are available on the POFMA website.

***About the POFMA Office***

*The POFMA Office, situated within the Infocomm Media Development Authority (IMDA), is responsible for the administration of the Protection from Online Falsehoods and Manipulation Act (POFMA). For more information about POFMA Office, visit [www.pofmaoffice.gov.sg](http://www.pofmaoffice.gov.sg).*