

Additional Measures – Bulletin 1

23 March 2020

As the global situation surrounding COVID-19 evolves rapidly, the government is elevating its preparedness by implemented a series of more strict travel conditions for residents and visitors.

Effective immediately, the government will be refusing entry to all international travelers. This travel restriction applies to all persons **except** the following:

1. New Zealand passport holders;
2. New Zealand permanent resident holders;
3. Australian citizens and permanent residents who normally live in New Zealand;
4. Permanent residents of the Cook Islands;
5. Cook Island work permit holders;
6. Cook Island resident permit holders;

Entry will also be permitted for any immediate family, whether partner or spouse, legal guardian and dependent children, if they are travelling with one of the above persons.

This travel restriction expires on 18 April 2020, barring any subsequent announcement.

IMPORTANT – ANY PERSONS FALLING IN THE ABOVE CATEGORIES FOR EXEMPTION THAT HAVE BEEN OUTSIDE NEW ZEALAND OR THE COOK ISLANDS IN A 14-DAY PERIOD PRIOR TO TRAVEL WILL NOT BE PERMITTED ENTRY TO THE COOK ISLANDS. THIS APPLIES TO NEW ZEALAND PASSPORT HOLDERS AND PERMANENT RESIDENTS, COOK ISLANDS PERMANENT RESIDENTS, AND ALL OTHERS FALLING IN THE AFOREMENTIONED CATEGORIES.

As part of the national Emergency Response Plan, the Ministry of Health (Te Marae Ora) is implementing further measures aimed at prospective and recent visitors.

Effective immediately, all new arrivals are required to undergo supervised quarantine for 14 days upon arrival. Visitors may return before the 14-day period with written consent from the Ministry of Health.

Additionally, all recent visitors to the Cook Islands having arrived over the previous two weeks will be contacted by TMO to assess their COVID-19 health status. Arrivals who are feeling unwell can also contact health authorities to discuss their symptoms at 0800 1800 or 080 1801. If you are feeling unwell please stay home.

The above restrictions will be enforced by Crown Law, allowing officials to supervise the 14-day quarantine period of visitors to the Cook Islands.

“So far we have been spared and have not yet had a positive case. Long may that situation last, but we can’t guarantee that and we must – and have – made plans for the eventuality that the virus will strike here,” said Prime Minister Henry Puna.

“Protecting and mitigating the Cook Islands from the coronavirus pandemic and keeping Cook Islanders alive and safe is a national priority issue.”

The government understands the necessity of preserving access to and from New Zealand for ensuring two-way flow of medical supplies and equipment, health professionals, and the outflow of COVID-19 test samples to New Zealand. Efforts are underway to solidify the government’s plan for keeping consistent transportation links open.

“Closing the border with New Zealand is not an option if we want to be able to access medical and non-medical supplies, if we want to maintain testing capability and should we need to medivac patients. A closed border would not enable us to do this” advised Secretary of Health Dr Aumea Herman.

As per the recent announcement by NZ government officials allowing the repatriation of foreign nationals to depart the Cook Islands for their home countries, the Ministry of Health will begin to conduct temperature testing of foreign nationals who've secured transit clearance through New Zealand – from today.

The government has also introduced additional measure for the Pa Enea (Outer islands).

Effective 23 March 2020, school holidays will be brought forward, with school officials tasked to prepare for remote teaching capability and focus on reinforcing hand hygiene, cough etiquette and social distancing practices.

For a period of one month ending 20 April 2020, the government is discouraging Pa Enea residents from gathering in groups of more than 10 people, particularly gatherings involving singing. Residents are also asked to avoid sporting, church and cultural events, and any gatherings at indoor venues where spacing between people of more than two meters cannot be provided.

Residents and visitors alike who are feeling unwell must stay home and call health officials for advice at 0800 1800 or 0800 1801. All cough, cold, and flu clinical services will now be conducted over the phone for preliminary checks.

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