

Being thankful, kind, and compassionate 16 November 2020

“On behalf of Te Marae Ora, I wish to extend our appreciation to the two casual contacts who returned last Friday. While the public health risk to the Cook Islands population is at the lower end, we know from the experience of other countries that the SARS-CoV-2 virus is stealthy and adept. Subsequently, supervised quarantine for these two, as well as another passenger seated close by, has been put in place as a precautionary measure. Tests of all arrivals have returned negative and complement the negative tests that were taken in NZ, within 96 hours before departure, said Secretary of Health,” Dr Aumea Herman today.

“What I appreciate most about these two young people, has been their courage to be honest regarding their movements in Auckland in the week prior to travel. Their actions have helped protect the people of the Cook Islands and we must be thankful.”

“We continue to monitor the situation in NZ and pleased that high testing volumes have not detected another COVID-19 case. The mandatory wearing of face masks on public transport in Auckland, as well as domestic flights in a few days, helps add another layer of protection for the Cook Islands.”

“The earlier part of our emergency response to COVID-19 focused heavily on border closures. We are one of a few Pacific countries to provide travel exemptions so that over 800 people could return home to join their families. However, while our border systems have kept COVID-19 out, the social and economic consequences have been severe.”

“Good public health can help in the recovery of our economy and we are shifting our public health response to reflect this. Announcements regarding vaccines and other medicines are also taking shape overseas, and we remain hopeful that the Cook Islands will receive these in 2021.

“We have been clear about trying to connect our families while keeping the public safe and want to sustain this. We are doing this by taking a careful, precautionary, and balanced approach so that we mitigate the risk of COVID-19 entering the Cook Islands, and therefore the risk of community transmission as we see in other parts of the world.”

“There are many factors that inform our decisions, and this includes ensuring we communicate better with our communities. Our success in keeping COVID-19 out would not have been possible without the strong leadership of Cabinet and our community,” acknowledges Dr Herman.

“But, we still ‘all’ have to be vigilant. We need to maintain our hand, face and cough/sneeze hygiene, wearing face masks in crowded and enclosed settings, and physical distancing. ‘We are all in this together’. The returnees have a part to play and so do we. Cook Islanders are well known for being kind and generous hosts. The people who arrived last Friday are our own anau. Lets be kind and generous to them too.”

For up to date information visit www.health.gov.ck or www.covid19.gov.ck

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