

Updated - Reaction to Auckland's Changing Levels 27 February 2021, 1.45pm

As you have probably heard Auckland has moved to Alert Level 3 (lockdown) and the rest of New Zealand to Alert Level 2 as of 6am today, for a period of seven days. NZ needed to do this to get on top of the cases they have and break the chain of transmission. Here in Rarotonga health officials have been working since last night's announcement contacting recent returnees, testing them along with any others who have been in close contact with them. These are precautionary measures only and there is absolutely no need for people to panic.

The Secretary of Health, Bob Williams is calling for the cooperation of the Rarotonga community. He is grateful to all sporting bodies for agreeing to cancel sporting events planned for this weekend. Other groups or organisations holding large gatherings, parties or meetings are also being asked to cancel or postpone their events.

It is likely that those attending Church services tomorrow will be asked to physically distance (keep 2 metres apart) and to refrain from singing.

Cook Islands Police is working with Te Marae Ora seeking the cooperation of the hospitality industry - such as bars, clubs, restaurants and night clubs and requesting they close this evening as Te Marae Ora continues to test returning passengers and give advice to casual contacts.

It is anticipated that schools will be open as usual on Monday, but any students who returned yesterday or who are living in the same home as a returnee who is self-isolating, will be required to remain at home until further advice is provided by Te Marae Ora.

A short time ago a drive through COVID-19 testing station was set up in front of the Ministry of Health, adjacent to the Tupapa Outpatients Clinic.

Any returnees off yesterday's flight who have not already been tested, or people who have been in close contact with someone who returned yesterday, or anyone who believes they have COVID-like symptoms and has not already been tested is encouraged to come to Tupapa. Please stay in your car and be patient and follow the direction of traffic monitors. If you cannot get to Tupapa, please call 54885, 55965 or 53860.

"I am extremely grateful for the cooperation of everyone thus far, it's important we all play our part. Health officials continue to recommend the practice of physical distancing, washing hands frequently and effectively, avoid touching your face, eyes, nose and mouth, and sneeze/cough into elbows or shirts. And if you are sick with a cough or fever, stay home and call us so that a doctor can assist you" Mr Williams said.

“We have kept COVID-19 at bay together by staying vigilant and we must all continue to do so. We all have a part to play in making sure we do the right thing” he concluded.

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