



Office of the Prime Minister
Press Release

18 April 2020

Statement from the Prime Minister: Living in a COVID-19 free country

The Prime Minister of the Cook Islands – Honourable Henry Puna, says the government of the Cook Islands’ priority regarding the coronavirus disease pandemic is to protect the public health and safety of its people.

“So far, we have been successful in defending the Cook Islands, keeping us COVID-19 free, and we don’t want to surrender this great effort. One of our priorities is to bring home our people stranded in New Zealand; but we have to do this in a way that keeps the Cook Islands COVID-19 free.”

“We commend the New Zealand Government for their public health measures that have helped us achieve our COVID-19 free status, and we continue to support New Zealand’s efforts in managing their fight against COVID-19.”

“We have some limitations in our health system, for example we do not have longer-term intensive care capability and we have many vulnerable people in our community with underlying diseases for whom contracting COVID-19 could have fatal consequences.”

“Our people who have been caught up in the lockdown in New Zealand are in safe hands and we thank New Zealand for looking after them.”

While the lockdown is still in place, the Head of Te Marae Ora Cook Islands Ministry of Health – Dr Josephine Herman, travelled to New Zealand yesterday.

Speaking from an Auckland Hotel where she is in managed isolation today, Dr Herman commented “our priority is to work with New Zealand officials to firm up the repatriation process for our people who want to return home. In doing so we cannot afford to drop our guard and we need to ensure this process is safe for them and their loved ones in the Cook Islands.”

The Prime Minister continued “we are unwavering in our determination to keep the Cook Islands free of COVID-19. That is why we need to be very very careful about how we manage any repatriations” he said.

“May I remind you that around the world over two million people have been afflicted with this disease, and more than 150,000 have died, and those figures are climbing daily. Can you blame us for wanting to continue to keep our Cook Islands paradise COVID-19 free?

“We must not undermine what we have achieved here in the Cook Islands as a country, through collaboration between our government, traditional leaders, church leaders, Island Councils, the private sector and our communities ‘aka Puna.’ Our unity and faith will continue to keep us safe and resilient as a people and as a nation.

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