



## Government of the Cook Islands

*Prime Ministers Live Announcement*

*Tuesday 24 March 2020 – 21:00*

Kia Orana again

Thank you to those who tuned in to my 6pm announcement tonight.

In light of new information received over the last hour, it is necessary for me to once more address our nation. As stated earlier tonight, from midnight tonight Tuesday 24 March 23:59, every person seeking entry to the Cook Islands, including returning Cook Islanders and Cook Islands residents, will be required to meet a minimum of 14 days supervised quarantine in New Zealand. The 14 days count commences from the confirmation by Te Marae Ora the Cook Islands Ministry of Health of supervised quarantine in New Zealand. Quarantine arrangements will be confirmed by Te Marae Ora within 48 hours.

I accept this decision will cause further disruption to our communities and our economy. Let me assure our people that your Cabinet has not taken these decisions lightly.

Ultimately this is the only decision that can be taken at this time to further strengthen the protection of our people from the dreadful effects of Covid-19 the coronavirus disease which we're seeing in New Zealand and far beyond, and is now at our doorsteps

Our Covid-19 response requires our government to put our people first. The disruptions this decision will cause are but a temporary inconvenience given the worst case scenario for our most vulnerable, our elderly and our sick. We cannot and must not take any further chances.

As I announced earlier today, it is heartening that the results of the second batch of swabs sent to New Zealand for COVID-19 testing are negative. While this is reassuring, we must continue to strengthen our response efforts. We are now awaiting the results of the next batch which were sent to New Zealand yesterday.

Yesterday, Te Marae Ora released information about three persons of interest under supervised quarantine. Two of these persons have been cleared

Let me at this juncture acknowledge with deep gratitude the contributions of everyone, to this whole of country effort to respond to Covid-19. It is a tribute to our values as a people and the many who are working tirelessly behind the scenes, at the frontlines, across business and our communities in Rarotonga, the pa enua and overseas, the transportation sector and our international partners, to ensure we give ourselves in this country the best possible chance to overcome this destructive pandemic.

We accept that for Cook Islanders and Cook Islands residents who are currently abroad, these decisions will have significant implications. I seek your understanding, solidarity and acceptance that this decision is ultimately in the collective interests of all Cook Islanders and Cook Islands residents those currently in country, and those abroad.

We acknowledge with great pride the voluntary actions of our Cook Islands communities in New Zealand and beyond, who continue to assist those in need during these most challenging and uncertain of times. I do not underestimate what I am asking of our people, but I want to emphasise that we are all in this together, and we must be united in our fight against COVID19. Please continue to be caring and kind in supporting each other during these difficult times.

As part of our immediate support to those impacted by Covid-19 restrictions, through the Administered Funds COVID-19 Response Fund , \$4.5M has been appropriated in the Supplementary Budget to be tabled in Parliament tomorrow.

Within the next 48 hours, government will detail specific financial support available to those Cook Islands residents now required to remain in New Zealand for the next 14 days, prior to entry to the Cook Islands. Details of that support will be delivered via the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Immigration (MFAI), and those affected are encouraged to register and make contact with the Cook Islands High Commission in Wellington and MFAI headquarters in Rarotonga. Those impacted should register their details on New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade SafeTravel website.

Please be patient and be assured that officials will be working as quickly and efficiently as they can to deal with the many enquiries coming through.

In the meantime, I urge everyone in country to familiarize yourselves with the Puna system who will provide critical support and guidance on the frontlines. The steps we take today will ensure our survival tomorrow.

It is necessary for me to extend our deepest gratitude to the Government of New Zealand for their unwavering support and assistance through this Covid-19 crisis. Never before have our ties of kinship and family been more important than now.

A few hours ago, Prime Minister Ardern announced a State of Emergency. At midnight tonight, New Zealand moves into Level 4 Covid-19 alert level, effectively shutting down all movement, except for essential services. Let all our prayers and thoughts be with Aotearoa at this time whilst we soldier on to fortify and strengthen our own capabilities to mitigate against Covid-19.

May I extend to Prime Minister Ardern, Deputy Prime Minister Peters, the Government and people of New Zealand our wholehearted love and support for the devastation they are currently experiencing brought about by Covid-19. To them I say: Our prayers are with you and for you, We are with you, we are all in this together. Kia toa e kia kaha.

To our people your safety and well-being continues to be our utmost priority. The decisive steps we are taking today will ensure our survival tomorrow. Your government is doing its utmost to ensure your safety and well-being. We ask of you the same.

Heed the words of Te Marae Ora STAY HOME. Together, we will overcome.

Meitaki Maata e kia manuia tatou katoatoa.

ENDS