



OFFICE OF THE PRIME MINISTER  
HON MARK BROWN  
GOVERNMENT OF THE COOK ISLANDS

MEDIA RELEASE

SETTING THE RECORD STRAIGHT  
19 NOVEMBER 2020

Prime Minister Mark Brown has just met with his Cabinet, who have agreed that Supervised Quarantine is not required for those arriving on tomorrow's flight.

The Prime Minister has clarified comments he made in an interview yesterday that were reported in today's Cook Islands News.

When the Prime Minister was being interviewed yesterday, primarily on a topic not related to COVID-19 or supervised quarantine, he was asked questions about political meetings that were being held around Rarotonga regarding the introduction of mandatory supervised quarantine.

The Prime Minister had a little earlier been alerted to the recently discovered COVID-19 case in Samoa. The person had arrived off a repatriation flight from Auckland late last week.

As we all subsequently discovered, the person (a sailor) had been returning from Europe via New Zealand - where he was in transit. This was not a New Zealand case of community transmission.

In an attempt to demonstrate how quickly the Cook Islands can reimpose Supervised Quarantine, the Prime Minister made reference to the Samoan case, and had that turned out to be a case of community transmission and had New Zealand shifted levels, so too would the Cook Islands. Hence the quote "that's how quickly we can respond. If New Zealand's situation changes, we change ours straight away."

"New Zealand has not changed their alert levels, so there will be no change to our border settings. At this stage only Cook Islanders, PRs and work permit holders can enter with a negative test." the Prime Minister said this morning.

PM Brown also noted the introduction yesterday of mandatory mask wearing on all public transport to, from and through Auckland and all domestic flight throughout New Zealand.

"I think New Zealand is being very proactive in adding another layer of precaution and protection in the community. This approach is also providing an extra layer of protection for Cook Islands people and everyone in fact, living in New Zealand. As we all know, a face covering helps to stop the spreading of droplets when people speak, laugh, cough, sing or sneeze. Wearing masks saves lives, that's the reality. I have asked my officials to prepare a mask wearing strategy for Cabinet to consider in the near future.

"We are very fortunate to have New Zealand as a buffer and supporter. New Zealand has shown the world how to fight and contain this disease; and we have benefitted from that, because since we closed our borders in March this year, the few exemptions we have allowed into the country have had to come through New Zealand. They have been limited to Cook Island families and essential workers. And they have had to pass through New Zealand's stringent COVID-19 and health checks."

“Our precautions are in step with what New Zealand does and goes up or down in relation to their alert system. The limited travel we have allowed across our border has been driven by the risks we perceive from people coming in from there. That’s why we have gone through supervised quarantine procedures from time to time. At the moment the perceived level of risk is very low. But, that may well change, in the coming days, weeks, months.”

Earlier today the Prime Minister met with the Leader of the Opposition, Hon Tina Browne and some of her colleagues, he explained the decision making process and the process around amending travel advisories. Both parties also discussed the quarantine free travel arrangement currently being negotiated with New Zealand and how it will allow, only when safe, reciprocal travel. In particular they discussed the impact for Cook Islanders intending to travel to New Zealand without having to have to undertake and fund two weeks of managed isolation in an isolation facility on arrival. Both parties agreed to work for the good of the country.

“What we all firmly agreed to is that we need to bolster our risk assessment models based on more science and epidemiology”, the Prime Minister noted.

“Government’s decision continues to based on the matrix below, this Border Control and Disease Transmission matrix is what has been guiding the government’s decision making process for many months already, however I will be asking my officials to review this matrix as we gain a better understanding of how COVID works and how it is spread.” the Prime Minister concluded.

NEW ZEALAND (NZ) (CI) COOK ISLANDS	NO CASES Level 1 Prepare	SPORADIC CASES Level 2 Reduce	CLUSTERS OF CASES Level 3 Restrict	COMMUNITY TRANSMISSION Level 4 Lockdown
<b>NO CASES</b> Preparation and Readiness Delay entry	NZ CI No border restrictions	NZ exit screen +/- test	NZ exit medical clearance, screen/test CI SQMC 14 days private exit screen +/- test	NZ and CI SQMC 14 days in facility exit screen +/- test
<b>SPORADIC CASES</b> Alert Delay transmission	NZ CI No border restrictions	NZ exit screen +/- test	NZ exit medical clearance, screen/test CI SQMC 14 days private exit screen +/- test	NZ and CI SQMC 14 days in facility exit screen +/- test
<b>CLUSTERS OF CASES</b> Activation Mitigate impact	NZ No border restrictions	NZ exit screen +/- test	NZ exit medical clearance, screen/test	NZ and CI SQMC 14 days in facility exit screen +/- test
	CI exit screen +/- test	CI exit screen +/- test	CI SQMC 14 days private exit screen +/- test	
<b>COMMUNITY TRANSMISSION</b> Mitigate impact	NZ No border restrictions	NZ exit screen +/- test	NZ exit medical clearance, screen/test	NZ and CI SQMC 14 days in facility exit screen +/- test
	CI exit screen +/- test	CI exit screen +/- test	CI SQMC 14 days private exit screen +/- test	

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