



Government of the Cook Islands

Te Kauono Tutara e te Mana Tiaki – Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Immigration

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MFAI encourage Cook Islanders to obtain Cook Islands status stamp

Te Kauono Tutara e te Mana Tiaki – Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Immigration (MFAI) has endorsed over 150 Cook Islands Status applications in the last week according to MFAI Principal Immigration Officer (PIO) Kairangi Samuela. “We expected this influx of applications,” she said, “following the announcement of removal of mandatory isolation for Cook Islands arrivals into New Zealand and had reallocated staffing resources to prioritise processing of Cook Islands status”.

Recent online discussions however, with a number of erroneous comments about Cook Islands status processing requirements need correction. “We recognise that we could’ve elevated some communications and public awareness on Cook Islands status processing requirements,” said Samuela. “This would’ve prevented some of the current misinformation circulating on social media and for this we apologise.”

Cook Islands status affirms unequivocal right of entry and unrestricted residence in the Cook Islands for the status holder. The Ministry is encouraging all Cook Islanders to apply for the Cook Islands status stamp, irrespective where they



are born. The process, which has been in place for many years, requires the applicant to produce an original certified copy of their birth certificate and the birth certificates of their Cook Islands parent or ancestors that prove they are a Cook Islanders as defined by the ERD. The fee is \$30 per application (as set by the 2008 immigration fee regulation) and on approval of the application, endorsement is placed on the last page of the applicants passport. Processing can be done immediately if all required documentation is presented on application to immigration officials. The status endorsement does not expire. When the passport expires and is subsequently renewed, the status holder submits the expired and renewed passport to MFAI for re-endorsement,

a processing fee of \$20 applies for re-endorsement.

“There has been a misperception that only Cook Islanders born outside the Cook Islands need to apply for Cook Islands status,” said Samuela. “This is not true and many Cook Islanders born in the Cook Islands have Cook Islands status stamps in their passports. The reality is Cook Islands residents now comprise many different nationalities and the number of non-Cook Islanders born in the Cook Islands has increased notably in recent years. Further, Cook Islanders, as defined by the ERD born and or resident abroad have grown significantly. The Cook Islands status stamp allows airlines and Cook Islands border official’s immediate confirmation of one’s unequivocal right of entry and unrestricted residence in the Cook Islands. We encourage all Cook Islanders who don’t yet have the status stamp to make application with the Ministry”.

Cook Islands air and maritime borders have been closed since March 2020 due to COVID 19 restrictions. In May 2020, Government granted exemptions for entry into the Cook Islands, limiting eligibility to the following classes of persons:

- Cook Islanders as verified by Cook Islands status stamp
- Cook Islands Permanent Residents
- Cook Islands work and or residence permit holders

“To minimize potential difficulties for travel to the Cook Islands, Cook Islanders who don’t yet have Cook Islands status stamps in their passports are encouraged to make application with the Ministry,” said Samuela.

Enquiries regarding this media release can be directed to MFAI Immigration Compliance and Office Manager Chere Arthur at chere.arthur@cookislands.gov.ck or phone 29347 during Ministry office hours.

Some frequently asked questions are:

I don't have the Cook Islands status stamp in my passport, am I allowed to leave the Cook Islands?

Yes. Unless ordered by the courts, all persons have right of departure from the Cook Islands.

Will I be allowed entry into New Zealand if I don't have the Cook Islands status stamp?

Entry into New Zealand is determined by the New Zealand government. Cook Islanders who have New Zealand citizenship have right of entry and unrestricted residence in New Zealand, as do all New Zealanders.

Can I return to the Cook Islands if I'm a Cook Islander and I don't have the Cook Islands status stamp?

Yes you can with the approval of MFAI. If you do not have a Cook Islands status stamp in your passport, you will need to make application to MFAI and provide evidence as per the requirements of Cook Islands status application. If you are presently overseas, you should contact MFAI at immigration2@cookislands.gov.ck

But I was born in the Cook Islands – why is this not enough for Immigration purposes for entry into the Cook Islands?

People from different nationalities are born in the Cook Islands but this does not give them automatic Cook Islands status as per the Entry, Residence and Departure Act 1971/1972. Cook Islands status as issued by MFAI affirms one’s unequivocal right of entry and unrestricted residence in the Cook Islands.

How do I prove that I am Cook Islander?

You must provide your birth certificate and the birth certificate of a parent who is a Cook Islander and was born in the Cook Islands. If neither of your parents were born in the Cook Islands, you will have to provide your grandparents birth certificates as evidence (the grandparent who was born and is a Cook islander) and if they weren’t born here you will have to go further back.

How much does this stamp cost and how long does it last for?

\$30 for the first application. This will be stamped in your passport and is valid as long as your passport remains valid. When your passport expires, bring in your new passport (with your old passport) so we can endorse your new passport with the stamp with a fee of \$30. There will be no need to provide further evidence.

Who do I need to contact to ask about this process?

Email immigration2@cookislands.gov.ck or call MFAI on 29347 and speak to any Immigration officer or visit our offices in Avarua

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