



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

MEDIA RELEASE

Cook Islands Cabinet makes call on next incoming flight

25 JANUARY 2021

Cook Islands Prime Minister Mark Brown has just finished chairing a Cabinet meeting focused on the ramifications of the widely reported COVID-19 community case in Northland, New Zealand.

“Cabinet was heartened with the confirmation from NZ COVID Response minister Chris Hipkins earlier this afternoon that there were no new community cases today. And that 15 of the 16 close contacts of the COVID-19 positive person had returned negative results. One test result is still pending at this stage. We understand that 154 people have been identified as contacts of the person – and that they are all isolating, pending test results. We further understand that a total of 157 staff from the managed isolation facility at the Pullman Hotel have been tested, along with 192 guests currently in the facility. Of those, 30 still have test results to come, and all others have returned negative results.”

“With the remaining test results in mind the Cook Islands is taking its lead from New Zealand in allowing more time for further test results to come in before we can reassure the public one way or the other of the extent of the spread. To that end while we await further results over the next 48 hours, the 30 affected passengers intending to travel to Rarotonga tomorrow will need to defer their flight to the next one departing Auckland on Saturday morning. Tomorrow’s flight will arrive with cargo and essential goods but no passengers. Wednesday’s departure will not be affected.”

“Cabinet appreciates the inconvenience and is able to advise that Air New Zealand will transfer bookings over at no cost. Te Marae Ora is in the process of contacting the affected returning Cook Islanders and work permit holders and will work through issues to do with accommodation and seeking additional COVID-19 tests directly with the individuals involved. This is essentially the look of travel in 2021, certainty of travel cannot be guaranteed, and we all need to appreciate that there are risks whenever we choose to travel abroad,” the Prime Minister Brown noted.

It is anticipated that over the next 48 hours New Zealand will have a better understanding as to whether or not community transmission has occurred. And for that we are grateful. Cabinet will meet again once New Zealand has determined whether or not community transmission has occurred.

Every in-country passenger on the last two flights has been tested, with all returning negative test results. Passengers on the flight that arrived Friday 15th January had swabs taken last week and they have been sent to NZ for processing.

Te Marae Ora is keeping in daily contact with the NZ Ministry of Health and will implement further measures as required if the situation changes.

Further updates will be provided once additional tests results are received.

ENDS.

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