



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

MEDIA RELEASE

Cook Islands Cabinet makes call on tomorrow's flight from Auckland

15 FEBRUARY 2021

Cabinet met a short time ago, and, received advice from officials on the ramifications of the widely reported COVID-19 community cases in South Auckland, New Zealand.

“Cabinet was heartened with the negative results received thus far from 12 of the 42 close contacts of the affected family. Cabinet noted that 30 test results remain unconfirmed as of right now”. Prime Minister Mark Brown said.

“Noting that the New Zealand government raised the Auckland Alert Level from 1 to 3 for 72 hours, ending midnight tomorrow night, and with the remaining test results in mind, Cabinet has decided to allow 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 and whether there has been public transmission. To that end while we await further results, the 28 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 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 for now we all need to appreciate that there are risks and potentially additional costs whenever we choose to travel abroad,” the Prime Minister noted.

It is anticipated that over the next 48 hours New Zealand will have a better understanding as to whether community transmission has occurred. And for that we are grateful. Cabinet will meet again once New Zealand has made this determination.

Every passenger on the last two flights has been tested, in-country, with all returning negative test results. Passengers on the flight that arrived Friday 12th February had swabs taken yesterday and they have all returned negative results.

Te Marae Ora is keeping in regular 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 in New Zealand are known.

The Travel Advisory affecting the Cook Islands is being revised and will posted to www.covid19.gov.ck once finalised.

ENDS.

Enquiries to Jaewynn McKay +682 55486; jaewynn.mckay@wovenpacific.com