



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

MEDIA RELEASE

Cook Islands Cabinet Decision re Friday's Flight

17 FEBRUARY 2021

The Cook Islands Cabinet has just met for the second time in as many days. As with the meeting on Monday morning, this meeting focused on the ramifications of the widely reported COVID-19 variant B1.1.7 cases (first detected in the UK) in South Auckland New Zealand. There are currently 6 confirmed community cases.

Cabinet considered the advice and recommendations from officials and based on this, has decided not to allow the passengers booked on the next flight (arriving Friday afternoon CKT) to enter the Cook Islands.

“Cabinet appreciates that this will be most unwelcome news to all those intending to travel back to Rarotonga this week. However, Cabinet made its decision based on the up to the minute advice it received, which included noting the following” Prime Minister Brown said.

- 1398 of the 1490 “casual plus” contacts’ at Papatoetoe High School have thus far tested negative, just over 90 test results remain outstanding;
- Outside of Papatoetoe High School there is still one close contact whose test was outstanding and 363 “casual plus” contacts’ tests outstanding
- A possible genomic similarity has been identified between the recent cases and someone who tested positive while in managed isolation in Auckland;
- The source of the latest infection has not yet been identified
- Staff at the workplace of Case A – LSG Sky Chefs have all tested negative

“Cabinet was firm with the view that while the risk was low enough for the alert level in Auckland to drop to Level 2 and for the rests of New Zealand to drop to Level 1 as from midnight last night, there is still a level of risk for the Cook Islands they are uncomfortable with. And there is still a lot of unknowns around the likely source, Cabinet also noted none of the current 6 community cases have travelled overseas recently”.

“As Prime Minister Ardern said yesterday in the post Cabinet press conference “although the outbreak is contained, there is every chance more community cases will be found.”

“With all this knowledge to hand, Cabinet does not feel comfortable allowing passengers into the country this week. We will meet again over the weekend and a further update can be expected after that meeting” the Prime Minister concluded.

Te Marae Ora will contact affected travellers directly and will advise of revised testing requirements and is encouraging all passengers to check the NZ Ministry of Health’s “Locations of Interest” which is frequently updated and to get tested if they have visited any of the venues at the times indicated on the attached:

<https://www.health.govt.nz/our-work/diseases-and-conditions/covid-19-novel-coronavirus/covid-19-health-advice-public/contact-tracing-covid-19/covid-19-contact-tracing-locations-interest#current>

ENDS.

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