

Meitaki Maata Rarotonga **2 March 2021, 9.15am**

Secretary of Health Bob Williams today reiterated his appreciation for the way most people responded to advice from Te Marae Ora over the weekend.

He also wanted to provide some clarity on where things are at.

“Those passengers who arrived last Tuesday were tested on Friday/Saturday and all tests results came back negative. Prior to leaving New Zealand they also tested negative. The passengers from last Tuesday’s flight, with the exception of 3 people, are not required to self-isolate. These three advised authorities that they had visited one of the locations of interest and whilst the risk is very low (they have not been identified as casual contacts) in line with the precautionary approach Te Marae Ora has committed to taking, these three will complete a 14-day period of self-isolation and will be tested again during this time.”

“Passengers who arrived on Friday’s flight were tested on Saturday and those results also came back negative. They had all also been tested three days prior to that test in New Zealand, with negative results. The risk analysis for these people has been deemed low, and they too can now re-enter the community, with the exception of three people who had also visited a location of interest, again whilst not identified as casual contacts, they too will complete a 14-day period of self-isolation and will be tested again during this time.”

“All hospitality venues are welcome to resume normal hours and all sporting activities can resume too. I note with interest that some sports are taking this opportunity to introduce public health measures into their “new” routine, and I support this approach and leadership.

“And talking of leadership, I want to thank the Cook Islands Police and the Rarotonga Puna, who were once again able to mobilize very quickly when asked and assist Te Marae Ora staff with the work that needed to be done on Friday and over the weekend. Puna have been an important part of our history and traditions and have risen to this latest challenge admirably since they were reinvigorated almost a year ago.”

“Finally, I want to ask people to try and avoid the temptation of spreading misinformation. Do not repeat gossip or unfounded rumors. Doing so can be dangerous and unhelpful and serves no purpose other than to create unnecessary anxiety among the community.

“What we all say and do makes a difference. We have kept COVID-19 at bay together by staying vigilant and working together and we need to continue doing this. We all have a part to play in making sure we do the right thing, honesty and honest people play a major role in this.”

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