

Update as at 8.30pm 17 August 2021

Kia Orana

Te Marae Ora (TMO) wishes to provide the following update:

The two Air New Zealand flights that arrived this afternoon were not carrying passengers.

Both flights departed with visitors returning to New Zealand. TMO understands that that a combined number of 321 passengers returned to Auckland today.

TMO travel information record indicates approximately 1500 passengers arrived in the country between 11th and 16th August. The man whose case was confirmed yesterday became symptomatic on Friday (13 August) and was likely infectious since Wednesday (11 August) according to the NZ Ministry of Health, hence the dates 11-16 that Te Marae Ora is working to.

Since early this morning Te Marae Ora has been testing passengers and local residents.

As at 7pm over 966 swabs had been received in the laboratory up at the hospital. The results from the first 108 swabs have all been negative.

The laboratory team who are working 12-hour shifts will process the first 500 swabs today, the remaining swabs taken today will be frozen ready for processing tomorrow.

The nurses staffing the four testing sites are also putting in extra hours and will be screening until 10pm tonight. The testing stations are located at: Black Rock Clinic, Constitution Park, Tupapa Outpatients, and the Muri Clinic.

Any passengers who arrived in the Cook Islands between 11-16 August and who are symptomatic or have visited a Location of Interest before travelling to the Cook Islands are asked to self-isolate and to contact the Te Marae Ora Contact Tracing Lines if they have not already done so. These numbers are: 57481, 57482, 57486, 56199 – and 29 664 and 29 110 extn 717.

Te Marae Ora is conscious that calls may not get answered on the first attempt people call, but please do not give up. We do want to hear from you and appreciate your patience.

Other passengers who arrived in this timeframe, and this includes returning Cook Islanders, are encouraged to drive to one of the four testing stations to be swabbed either before 10pm this evening or tomorrow between 9am and 4pm.

Once people have been tested they are required to self-isolate whilst they await their test result. Please note that all those who undertake a COVID-19 test are required to self-isolate and may not travel to NZ under the QFT agreement until a negative test result has returned.

Te Marae Ora is encouraging all New Zealand visitors currently in the Cook Islands to register on www.safetravel.govt.nz or to contact the New Zealand High Commission on 22201 or by emailing nzhcraro@gmail.com

Finally, at this time, Secretary of Health Bob Williams would like to acknowledge the work and effort of members of his team at Te Marae Ora, the wider public sector, tourism and private sectors and members of our communities for their cooperation over the last 24 hours both here on Rarotonga and the island of Aitutaki.

“Working together as a team is what we need to do and keep doing. It’s important that we do not panic and that we follow the advice of the health professionals. Alert Level 2 requires us to wash our hands regularly, cough and sneeze into our elbow, physically distance 2m away from the next person where possible. If you’re not well, stay at home and call your health professional and please get into the habit of using your CookSafe card and tag in wherever you go. Viruses don’t move, people move them, let’s do all we can to stop this movement.”

CookSafe and its partner CookSafe+ (an app you can download at no cost) when used together proved a complete contact tracing system.

Make sure you’re registered for the QR Code Cook Safe card and downloaded the CookSafe+ app. Note, Bluetooth on your phone needs to be activated for the app to work.

ENDS: For more information, please visit www.health.gov.ck or contact Jaewynn McKay; jaewynn,mckay@cookislands.gov.ck +682 55486