



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

Wage Subsidy and Sole Trader Grants to be Reinstated

27 August 2021

Prime Minister and Minister of Finance Mark Brown says that while the pause to the economic recovery due to the Delta community outbreak in New Zealand is frustrating, he is hopeful that we will be back on the road to recovery soon.

“The three months that our travel bubble was open for, gives us great confidence in our ability to bounce back quickly when we do open for business again. We all saw the demand and optimism over the last few months. Our tourism market has proven to be not only resilient but also adaptable to the new challenges of a rapid increase in visitor numbers. That gives me great comfort in rolling the reinstatement of support to our private sector.” Mr Brown said today.

The Prime Minister today announced the reinstatement of two key components of the successful business support from last year’s economic response plan; wage subsidies and sole trader grants for the immediate pause period.

“If we see a further extension of border closure with New Zealand, we will also consider bringing back a one-off business grant in October alongside these two initial support packages”.

“Our economy is in a very different cycle now that we are in recovery mode” says the Prime Minister.

“We need short, sharp, support, and we are achieving that by getting cash to businesses for August and September through a streamlined process which will also accommodate some of the employment growth experienced by some businesses since May”.

“If New Zealand is not able to contain the current outbreak then we will consider additional support measures depending on the length of time we are looking at, but businesses can be much more confident now, than at the start of COVID-19 pandemic in 2020”.

“We know that this pause is temporary as we wait for New Zealand to contain the current outbreak and increase its vaccinated population. Every country in the world is learning to live with COVID-19. But the risk of COVID-19 entering our country now, is still too high from those New Zealanders and their families who remain unvaccinated. We continue to work closely with New Zealand in terms of the very best health advice and what we believe our own health system can deal with” says the Prime Minister.

“While this pause in our economic recovery is challenging, it was not unexpected. That is why we budgeted \$15m for additional business support in the Government’s Budget 2021-22 which was released in June”.

The Prime Minister remains confident that Government agencies are working together to ensure the right balance for both the health of people in the Cook Islands (residents and tourists) as well as the recovery of our economy.

“This is a delicate balancing act and to date we believe by working closely with New Zealand and their advisors as well as our own, we have kept our country completely COVID-19 free. One of the very few countries in the world to achieve that. Again, I would like acknowledge the work of Te Marae Ora and the Border Easement Taskforce for achieving this success and keeping Covid out”.

“Our focus this year and into the next two financial years remains firmly on economic recovery and we are doing that in partnership with our private sector through a range of key work streams making up the Economic Recovery Roadmap (ERR)”.

“This pause gives us the opportunity to reflect on the past three months, and take learnings from this period, and position ourselves even better for when the borders reopen.”

“I have every confidence that this government will continue to work hard with and for our people, as we have always done, and to progress our nation’s prosperity.”

“We should not be afraid to continue our path to recovery, working with one another, to ensure the best outcomes for all of the people who are lucky enough to call Cook Islands home.”

Ends: Media queries to Press Secretary – Jaewynn McKay;
jaewynn.mckay@cookislands.gov.ck +682 55486