



Government of the Cook Islands

Te Kauono Tutara e te Mana Tiaki – Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Immigration

13 September 2021

COOK ISLANDS GOVERNMENT ANNOUNCES PROCESS FOR MANAGED RETURNS

In their deliberations this afternoon, the Cook Islands Cabinet have approved the Managed Returns Plan for the return of Cook Islands residents otherwise stranded in New Zealand following the current ‘Delta outbreak’ in Auckland and resultant suspension on inwards international arrivals to the Cook Islands since 16 August .

To date, the Cook Islands Government, through the Cook Islands High Commission in Wellington, has been engaged with some 350 Cook Islands residents currently sheltering in New Zealand who have registered for managed return to the Cook Islands, with 125 of these being in regions outside of Auckland.

“The return of our Cook Islands residents who have been stranded in New Zealand since the first detection of Case A and the resultant suspension of inwards international arrivals from New Zealand has been a priority of our Cabinet and therefore the Border Easement Taskforce (BET) including the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Immigration (MFAI) since the 16 August,” said MFAI Secretary and BET Chair Tepaeru Herrmann. “The Plan approved by Cabinet today will focus on a first cohort comprising those currently sheltering in place outside the Auckland region on a flight from Wellington or Christchurch”.

While no date has been set for the first repatriation flight, with Cabinet approval of the Managed Returns Plan, MFAI is working closely with Te Marae Ora – Ministry of Health (TMO), Air New Zealand and New Zealand agencies for the early and safe return of the 125 sheltering in regions outside Auckland.

Based on pre-registration information, Cook Islands residents sheltering in regions outside Auckland will be contacted directly to formally apply for managed return via completion of the ‘Cook Islands Managed Return application Form’. A negative COVID-19 test result within 72 hours prior to departure as well as mandatory completion of the ‘Online Contact Information Form’ will be required. A period of at least 7-days in MIQ on arrival into Rarotonga will also be required.

As confirmed by Prime Minister Brown in his announcement this evening, Cook Islands residents sheltering in Auckland must wait for the alert level to drop to Level 2 or below before repatriation can commence from Auckland.

“I want to thank our people who have pre-registered for return home with our High Commission for their continued patience as we work to ensure their safe return whilst preventing COVID-19 and specifically the delta variant from reaching the Cook Islands,” said Secretary Herrmann. “We extend our appreciation also to our partners in New Zealand, various New Zealand entities and our Cook Islands communities who have since the onset of COVID, bolstered our capacity to deliver some assistance to our people awaiting return. Should additional assistance be required by those stranded, we urge continued engagement with our High Commission in the first instance (at dhc@cookhicom.org.nz) and further information will be forthcoming in the coming days around enhanced support to those awaiting repatriation.”

For enquiries regarding this release, please contact MFAI at ManagedReturns@cookislands.gov.ck