

Update 2: Operation Turou Managed Return of Stranded Cook Islanders and Cook Islands Residents 7 October 2021 (CKT)

Kia Orana

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

As many of you are already aware, the first Cohort of 87 Cook Islanders and work permit holders stranded in New Zealand as a result of the current COVID-19 community outbreak, arrived in Rarotonga early this morning.

No fewer than 51 border control workers (Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Immigration, Customs, Biosecurity, Air New Zealand, Airport Authority, CI Police and Te Marae Ora health officials) were on duty from just after midnight to ensure the safe processing of the passengers through their various divisions.

Passengers were all then transferred to the MIQ facility at the Edgewater, where they have settled in for the next 6 days.

All the 51 border workers were swabbed and tested for COVID-19 at the conclusion of their duties and all test results came back negative by mid-morning.

It should be noted too, that everyone who was working in the arrivals hall and exit terminal was wearing full PPE (Personal Protective Equipment). Earlier in the day these personnel were shown the correct way to don and doff PPE.

All the arriving passengers aged 2 years and up were tested this morning and all 75 have returned negative test results.

A reminder to anyone dropping off provisions for friends or family currently in MIQ at the Edgewater, to please put any food in reusable containers that can be taken out when the guest leaves MIQ. This would help greatly in limiting the amount of rubbish public health officers need to handle.

“I want to thank not only my own staff but all those who were on duty last night and who worked together to ensure the safety of everyone. And of course, there are a number of individuals who together with MFAI and our Ministry of Finance and Economic Management (MFEM) have been working towards the safe return of our people for almost 2 months both in Aotearoa and here, once again this has been a superb team effort and I say meitaki maata to all involved” said Secretary of Health Bob Williams.

“Last night’s operation has set us up well for the return of the second cohort.”

“So too are the efforts of the Edgewater staff, operations, and security supported by the Puaikura Puna Security and also the restaurant staff who are preparing meals for all the returnees and all those involved in the operation at MIQ,” he concluded.

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