



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

STATEMENT TO THE NATION – CONFIRMED COVID CASE
13 FEBRUARY 2022, 8PM

Kia orana tatou katoatoa,

This evening we detected our first case of COVID-19 that has arrived into our country.

This case is not connected to the visitor who tested positive for Omicron after leaving Rarotonga and arriving back in New Zealand last Monday.

Instead, this is a person – who is currently isolated and under observation at their private holiday accommodation – who arrived in Rarotonga on Thursday, February 10.

They were a close contact of a family member in Auckland who had tested positive yesterday in NZ. As a precaution this person went to the Tupapa drive through to get tested today just in case.

While she was asymptomatic, she returned a positive result in just a few hours later. The case been issued an Isolation Order. The case is travelling with two others, and they will all remain in isolation until they no longer test positive for Covid-19.

It is helpful for us in this case that this person was staying in private holiday accommodation, not a resort or motel. The relevant Puna has been advised and they will mobilise to assist the people in isolation.

The case is double vaccinated and had returned a negative PCR test prior to boarding their flight from New Zealand.

Our extremely high vaccination rate is another factor in our favour, as it slows the spread of transmission and reduces the health impacts in those who do contract this virus.

I can also tell you that from the moment Te Marae Ora confirmed this person as testing positive for Covid-19, our contact tracing team swung into action to trace their movements since arriving in Rarotonga and to start identifying any potential close contacts.

You can view the locations of interest and the times we have so far identified by going to the TMO Facebook page or Covid-19 website www.covid19.gov.ck/loi. In addition, TMO will use all forms of media to advise these places of interest.

As each new piece of information is gathered and confirmed, we will also be keeping you all as up-to-date as possible as any new places of interest and potential close contacts are identified.

Those people deemed to be close contacts of this case are currently being contacted by TMO and will be advised to get tested. In addition, anyone displaying Covid-19-like symptoms – which most commonly include fever, cough, sore or scratchy throat or aches and pains – is asked to get tested at the drive through at Te Taua Terevete (Constitution) Park testing station tomorrow, any time from 9am to 4pm.

If you are feeling unwell, please stay home until you are able to get tested – and for the rest of us, remember to mask up, practice physical distancing, tag in with your CookSafe card and keep up those good general hygiene habits.

For our children – yes, schools will be open tomorrow but all students and teachers on Rarotonga and Aitutaki are now encouraged to wear masks while indoors. For those at school in the rest of the Pa Enua, you should simply keep up with the health measures that have already been implemented.

With regard to the Pa Enua – all passenger flights will be suspended from midnight tonight. For Aitutaki passenger travel to Aitutaki is suspended until Wednesday. For the rest of the Pa Enua passenger travel will be suspended for 7 days. Outwards travel from the Pa Enua to Rarotonga will be allowed.

I understand that some of you may feel frightened or anxious but please rest assured that all branches of our government are working together to deal with this situation to protect us all.

We have expected this virus, we have prepared for it, and we are ready to fight it.

The protocols and procedures we have put in place are working and already making a difference as our various government teams and taskforces go about doing what now needs to be done to protect our communities.

We have remained vigilant; we have caught this case – and now I ask you to remain vigilant too.

As we all know, the best defence against this virus is by keeping calm, working together, and making use of all the health and safety precautions that we know make a real difference in protecting us all from Covid-19. Those of you who have changed your mind and want to get vaccinated, please contact TMO who will arrange an appointment for your vaccination. This is our best defence along with wearing your mask, maintain physical distancing, tag in with your CookSafe card and keep up those good general hygiene habits.

Kia orana e kia manuia.

ENDS: Media Enquiries to Jaewynn McKay; jaewynn.mckay@cookislands.gov.ck; +682 55486