



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

PRIME MINISTER'S ADDRESS
COVID-19 UPDATE FEB 28
28 FEBRUARY 2021

Kia Orana tatou

Health ministry Te Marae Ora (TMO) can now confirm that 17 more cases of Covid-19 as part of a single cluster have been identified since our last update, bringing the total number of positive cases to 42 as of 2pm Today, February 28.

Of the 42 positive cases, 38 are currently in isolation while cases 1-4 have completed their isolation periods and been released, having also been symptom-free for the last 72 hours of their isolation. Of the current 38 in isolation, 22 are part of a single family cluster.

Three of our new cases are aged under five years old and have not been vaccinated at all, while four are aged between 5-11 years and so have only received one dose. These are all children from the same family cluster.

All our cases have been vaccinated, and while some have experienced mild symptoms, none have required hospital treatment so far. The 10 day isolation period will apply to all these people and we expect them to be released from isolation after that.

In addition to the 38 positive cases currently in isolation, we also have 70 close contacts currently under quarantine. As previously stated, only household contacts are still required to complete 10 days of quarantine, while for other close contacts the quarantine period has been reduced to seven days, with PCR tests on days one and five and a RAT test on day seven.

TMO has processed a total of 1754 PCR tests since our first positive case was detected on, February 13, including 350 tests conducted yesterday on Sunday, February 27.

We can also now confirm that as a result of the mass testing carried out yesterday, we have found no evidence of active community transmission in either Apii Nikao, Apii Te Uki Ou or Tereora College, and so the Ministerial Order for their closure will lapse tonight, with all three schools reopening tomorrow on Tuesday, March 1.

Testing and in particular RAT testing which gives a result in 15 minutes will be our focus as case numbers increase. To this end I would like to thank Prime Minister Ardern and the NZ government for her support for the supply of a further 20,000 RAT tests. We encourage anyone with symptoms to get tested. Our testing regime continued at Constitution Park today, and the drivethrough testing station there will continue to be open throughout the week from 9am-4pm, with testing also still available at Tupapa Primary Care by appointment from 9am-3pm, seven days a week. To make your appointment and for directions if required, call 20065 or 20066.

RAT testing will also continue to be available at the airport testing station during Air Rarotonga operating hours.

When you do get tested, you MUST self-quarantine at your home or accommodation until you are contacted by TMO with your results and given the all-clear. It should be noted that others in your household are not required to self-quarantine during this time unless your test returns a positive result.

Passenger travel to Aitutaki still remains open at this time, while passenger travel to the rest of the Pa Enua will once again be suspended for 2 days from midnight tonight until midnight Wednesday, March 2. To allow further testing results to be obtained.

Finally, TMO would also like to remind all of our people of the extreme importance of mask-wearing at this time, as the Covid-19 virus begins to spread throughout our community.

Our high vaccination rate provides us with the best possible protection from Covid-19, but we also ask us all to continue to wear masks indoors, in crowded outdoor spaces and on public transport will also help limit the spread of this virus and in turn help protect the more vulnerable amongst us.

This is why it is so very important that we continue to observe our Covid-19 health and safety measures by wearing masks, maintaining physical distancing, tagging in with our CookSafe cards and practising good general hygiene.

Kia orana e kia manuia