



Government of the Cook Islands
Te Kauono Tutara e te Mana Tiaki
Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Immigration

Sunday 29 March 2020 – 0700

Additional support for Cook Islands residents stranded by COVID-19 measures



The Cook Islands Government have elevated and are expediting provision of financial and other support to Cook Islands residents needing to complete lockdown period in New Zealand.

Speaking from Rarotonga this morning, Foreign Secretary Tepaeru Herrmann said “All governments including our own, are having to move very quickly and adapt to changing circumstances by the minute to mitigate against the spread of COVID-19 and keep our people safe. We recognise these changes have caused major disruption to the travel plans of Cook

Islands residents trying to get home and this is both stressful and financially difficult. It is however critical all Cook Islands residents stranded in New Zealand by Covid-19 movement restrictions comply fully with New Zealand’s nation-wide lockdown for at least the next month. Stay where you are. It’s safest for you, for those around you and all of us”.

The Cook Islands Government have allocated some dedicated funds to support returning Cook Islands residents impacted by COVID-19 travel restrictions with specific assistance measures for accommodation, welfare and medical support. Those needing assistance are to register with the Cook Islands High Commission in Wellington and should email firstsec@cookhicom.org.nz

Close to 200 Cook Islands residents are already registered with the High Commission and many are now communicating with each other thereby providing an additional level of support.

“We’ve been heartened by the manner in which those stranded are continuing to adjust to rapidly evolving circumstances, comply with government restrictions on movement and leaning on each for additional support. That sense of community, part of our Cook Islands DNA, will be a source of reassurance, unity and strength in the days ahead and our government will continue, delivered through our High Commission in Wellington, to remain engaged with those stranded and avail support, including financial and other support where

needed and able,” said Secretary Herrmann.

Those registered with the High Commission can expect an update within the day, including details of accommodation, welfare and medical support available. Further information will also be posted to the MFAI and High Commission pages at <https://www.facebook.com/mfaicookislands/> and <https://www.facebook.com/thecookislandsinnewzealand/>

Queries regarding this media release and support available to be directed to firstsec@cookhicom.org.nz



Photo:

1 Foreign Secretary Tapaeru Herrmann speaking last year at the launch of the MFAI Statement of Strategic Intentions on MFAI organisational values; and

2 Cook Islands High Commissioner to New Zealand Elizabeth Wright Koteka last year at “Taokotai’anga” the annual gathering of Cook Islands tertiary students from across New Zealand. Stranded students are amongst those the High Commission will be giving particular support over the next month.

End.