

Easing of social restrictions reflects Cook Islands's COVID-free status

The Government yesterday lifted the ban on large group gatherings and eased sale of alcohol restrictions, reflecting the country's COVID-19 free status. Last week domestic travel restrictions were wound back so it is now possible to travel freely between Rarotonga and the Pa Enuā.

The Prime Minister Hon. Henry Puna says the restrictions have played a key role in keeping COVID-19 out of the Cook Islands and its people safe.

"The easing of social restrictions marks a turning point in our country's battle against COVID-19," he says.

"Emergency restrictions are there to keep the country safe and they've done their job. Stopping people do the things that are a normal part of life is not something we do lightly. It isn't easy to stay away from the people you love - and I want to thank our people for rising to the challenge and doing their bit to keep the Cook Islands COVID-19 free. We're now at a point where it's safe to wind things back a little but people should remain vigilant. Continue to use your common sense and show kindness when out in the community. We cannot risk undoing all the good work we've done to keep the Cook Islands COVID-19 free," he says.

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SOCIAL GATHERINGS

There is no longer a requirement to limit the size of group gatherings. The ministerial order that required people to seek an exemption from the Secretary of Health for gatherings of more than 10 in public and private settings has been revoked.



ALCOHOL RULES

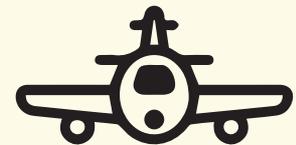
The ministerial order in respect of retail licence holders limiting the hours of sale has also been revoked. However, the Liquor Licensing Authority has determined that it will be a con-



dition of retail licences that there will no longer be any retail sale of alcohol after 6pm. One of the objects of the Authority is to reduce alcohol abuse to the extent it can through its licensing process and alongside the amended retail hours the Authority is in the process of working with other licence holders in an effort to reduce the harmful effects of alcohol in the Cook Islands.

DOMESTIC TRAVEL

The COVID-19 focused domestic travel regulations were revoked on 20 April 2020. It is now possible for people to again travel freely between Rarotonga and the Pa Enuā.



While COVID-19 domestic restrictions have lifted, Te Marae Ora has issued special domestic travel advice relating to dengue.

Members of the public who have had dengue recently are asked to stay home within two weeks of any travel to the Pa Enuā. This is in order to contain and eliminate the virus in Rarotonga and Aitutaki and stop it taking hold in the outer islands.

International travel requirements remain unchanged.