



Office of the Prime Minister
Press Release

24 March 2020

Official Statement – CODE YELLOW

Following on from the complete lockdown taking place in New Zealand at midnight tonight (Wednesday NZ time and Tuesday CI time), the Cook Islands will move to a Code Yellow status from 6pm Wednesday Cook Islands time.

Secretary of Health Dr Josephine Aumea Herman says the escalation from Code Blue to Code Yellow signals health officials have reasonable grounds to believe there is a suspected case of COVID-19 in our community.

“Code Yellow means COVID-19 is contained but the risk of community transmission is growing. At this stage, preventative measures implemented early can slow the transmission of infection and reduce the peak number of cases. We’re aiming to flatten the curve and slow the spread of the disease, but this will rely heavily on community action and participation. We urge people to stay home whenever possible, especially when you are sick, avoid public spaces and cut down gatherings of more than 10 people,” she says.

Prime Minister – Henry Puna – made that announcement late this afternoon. In his comments the PM offered support and sympathy to the government and people of New Zealand saying, “These are testing times for them, and on our behalf I offer to the people of Aotearoa our wholehearted love and support for the devastation they are currently experiencing brought about by COVID-19.

I say to them our prayers are with you, we are with you, we are all in this together. Kia toa e kia kaha.”

He went on to say that so far 80 people have been tested for COVID-19, and all 11 test results that have come back so far have been negative. He also said that of the three people of interest medical staff were actively supervising, two are no longer of interest and the third is being monitored.

While the Prime Minister confirmed there are no known cases of Covid-019 here, by lifting the alert level to Code Yellow, the country must start acting as if there are; we must change our ways, become more disciplined and stay at home.

With regard to calls to close our borders, the Prime Minister says our borders are closing in and getting tighter, but the country needs the planes to send out our sick, and tests, to bring in supplies and to support our health efforts.

But more stringent entry requirements are about to be introduced. From midnight tonight – Tuesday 24 March 2020 – all persons seeking to enter the Cook Islands will need to undergo at least 14 days supervised quarantine and COVID testing in New Zealand before departure. The requirements for the quarantine will be set by the Cook Islands, and will apply to everyone wanting to come in, including Cook Islanders and Cook Islands residents.

The Prime Minister says the additional measures are designed to protect the health of Cook Islanders and reduce the threat of COVID-19.

“We cannot, and must not take chances.”

ENDS

For Health-related questions or concerns please visit www.covid19.gov.ck or contact the Healthline on 0800 1800; 0800 1801; 0800 1802 or as listed below to go direct to your Puna. These are all free calling numbers.

Tupapa-Maraerenga 0800 1803

Takuvaine-Tutakimoa 0800 1804

Rapa 0800 1805

Nikao-Panama 0800 1806

Ruaau 1800 1807

Akhoa 0800 1808

Murienua 0800 1809

Titikaveka 0800 1810

Ngatangia 0800 1812

Matavera 0800 1813