



Office of the Prime Minister
Press Release

Cook Islanders for the return home – Cohort 2

14 May 2020

Tomorrow (15 May), our second cohort of Cook Islanders stranded following the border measures implemented in March will arrive in Rarotonga. As with the first cohort who returned last Friday, they would have completed their first 14-day supervised quarantine and medical clearance process in Auckland at the Holiday Inn and provided negative COVID-19 tests.

Border agencies and airline representatives have met to discuss how last week's arrival plans worked out and to make any refinements prior to the arrival of the second cohort.

“It is important for us to maintain COVID 19 preventative and physical distancing requirements as well as manage our legal requirements for passenger and personnel safety – said Principal Immigration Officer, Kairangi Samuela.

The inclement weather this week was also factored into the change of process and all passengers will now proceed to the terminals, through Immigration clearance and onto their transportation via airside door.

The returnees will be transported directly to the Edgewater Resort and Spa. At the Edgewater they will undertake a 14-day supervised quarantine and medical clearance process (SQMC) and will require to have produced a negative COVID-19 swab test before they return to join their families in their homes.

Acting Secretary of Health – Dr Tereapii Uka – says “this will complete the Te Marae Ora (TMO) two 14-day SQMC process that has been designed to minimise the risk of the SARS-CoV-2 virus being introduced into the Cook Islands. The Cook Islands was declared a COVID-19 free zone on 16 April 2020, and we want to ensure we maintain this status.

Friends and families are welcome to come to the airport, however the returning passengers, once they have been processed will be accessing their transport from the runway side of the terminal, so any glimpses of them at the airport will be fleeting.

While at the Edgewater, guests will be required to stay in their rooms with their movements limited to their designated areas. All their meals will be delivered to them. Most will have onsite laundry facilities and they will have the opportunity to exercise twice daily - as was the arrangement in Auckland.

Cook Islands Police will have the support of Edgewater Security and members of the 10 Rarotonga Puna to ensure the hotel borders are secure from intruders, and guests remain in their rooms outside of scheduled exercise times.

Families wishing to bring food or clothes for their loved ones must leave these at the drop-off location established at the Edgewater for delivery to rooms. The Edgewater will accept drop-offs on Friday between 8am and 12noon, and from Saturday onwards from 8am-4pm daily.

Te Marae Ora will provide onsite nursing care, which includes daily health checks. Medical assistance and mental health services will be available as required, as will support from Internal Affairs regarding any welfare needs. TMO will also work closely with Hotel employees to ensure infection prevention and control procedures are followed.

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