

Cook Islanders for the return home

3 May 2020

This coming Friday (8 May), our first cohort of Cook Islanders stranded following the border measures implemented in March will arrive in Rarotonga. 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 have met to discuss plans for their arrival, and to work through the logistics for the safe processing of travellers through the arrivals terminal, ensuring physical distancing, and straight through to buses that will transport them direct 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.

The Secretary of Health – Dr Josephine Aumea Herman – 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.

Te Marae Ora is asking families and friends to stay away from Rarotonga airport so that the arrivals process can be completed efficiently and safely.

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 that will be established at the Edgewater for delivery to rooms.

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 as regards any welfare needs. TMO will also work closely with Hotel employees to ensure infection prevention and control procedures are followed.”

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