

Solid processes are in place

4 September 2020

Last night it was still not known exactly how many people will be on the first passenger carrying flight from New Zealand since the recent surge in COVID-19 cases in Auckland.

The returning Cook Islanders and residents booked on the flight that arrives this afternoon, have to meet a number of strict conditions, including a negative test for COVID-19 and having an approved place to stay during their 14 days supervised quarantine process.

Late yesterday, of the sixty or so passengers booked, about half had received their test results, while others were still waiting. Officials say, anyone without a negative test or failing to meet any of the other requirements, will not be allowed to board the flight.

Once onboard all passengers will be required to wear masks for the duration of the flight.

On arrival, before they exit the plane, the returnees will be briefed by Secretary of Health Dr Aumea Herman on what is expected of them while in supervised quarantine. Infection Prevention Control precautions will apply with passengers' luggage, including carry on luggage being disinfected before entry into the terminal. Likewise checked luggage will be disinfected before being placed on the carousel in the arrivals hall.

On completion of arrival procedures the passengers will be transported to their pre-arranged and approved accommodation where they will be required to undergo strict quarantine for the next 14 days; during which they will undertake a COVID test twice. Only after the 14 days, without symptoms and being found to be free of the coronavirus will they be allowed back into the wider community.

Anyone who breaches the quarantine may be prosecuted and face a penalty of up to \$10,000 or imprisonment.

Dr Herman – says through the COVID-19 Act 2020 she has issued the Category Quarantine Order to activate the 14 day supervised quarantine process for all those arriving today.

“We will be taking all the precautions we deem necessary to protect our people and keep our country COVID-19-free. Border agencies including police, immigration and health are working at pace to ensure the necessary processes are in place. The Puna have a vital role to play, as do the 10 community health clinics throughout Rarotonga. Under the COVID-19 Act Te Marae Ora is the lead agency and we work closely with other agencies and our communities, and we are taking our responsibilities seriously.”

The Minister of Health – Hon. Rose Brown – is fully supportive of the efforts that have been put in place. “I want to thank all our people who are playing a part in working to bring our people home safely. Safe for them and safe for those of us already here. We all have a part in making sure that we do the right thing. We must continue to practise our infection control and prevention measures that have been found to protect people from catching this disease.

These include physical distancing, washing hands frequently, not touching your face, and practising cough and sneeze etiquette. We have kept COVID-19 at bay by being vigilant and we must continue to do so.”

For up to date information visit www.covid19.gov.ck

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