

## **COVID-19 (Coronavirus Disease) Act Enacted**

**25 March 2020**

With the threat of COVID-19 worldwide, the government has introduced new legislation which provides the legal framework necessary to facilitate the national response to prevent, limit or mitigate the spread of COVID-19 and its effects.

Under the COVID-19 Act, the Minister of Health has additional authority to deal with this public health emergency and the threat it poses.

Officials from Te Marae Ora will have authorisation to order supervised quarantine or isolation for periods of 14 days. Learn more about supervised quarantine and supervised isolation [here](#).

All members of the public are asked to follow the advice of health officials, whether it's being asked to be tested for COVID-19 or placed in quarantine/isolation. With public safety at risk, anyone refusing to cooperate may be arrested and detained by police, as defined under the law.

In more severe circumstances, health officials may need to occupy or seize private property for use as a quarantine or isolation facility. Owners of any property affected under this provision are entitled to compensation and review/appeal rights, in accordance with the Constitution.

To facilitate the important work of Te Marae Ora, health officers may need to make certain enquiries related to COVID-19. Members of the public are obligated to answer all enquiries truthfully, and it is an offence if an individual fails to do so.

The above provisions are wide sweeping and necessary to allow health officials to undertake their work and keep our community safe.

The COVID-19 Act 2020 will automatically cease to have effect after 12 months unless extended by Parliament.

Individuals who fail to comply with the Act could face up to 12 months in prison and fines up to \$10,000. Businesses who fail to comply with the law are subject to fines up to \$200,000 if convicted.

Although there are no confirmed cases, the introduction of the legislation follows the decision by the Cook Islands government to move to Code Yellow.

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