



Office of the Prime Minister
Press Release

PRESS RELEASE

26 March

Official Statement – post Address to the Nation

"We cannot afford to have one person carry the virus through our borders" - PM's national address focuses on important health and wellbeing measures

Prime Minister Henry Puna focused on the nation's health and wellbeing and provided more detail on the country's efforts to prevent COVID-19 from entering our shores through new supervised quarantine rules, in his address to the nation tonight.

New 14+14 rules require every person seeking entry to the Cook Islands to register with Te Marae Ora before embarking on 14 days supervised quarantine in New Zealand, and when they are cleared to travel, commit to another 14 days supervised quarantine in the Cook Islands. Te Marae Ora has worked with the Pasifika Medical Association to establish the process.

"To our people, I seek your understanding with this quarantine process put in place as it will help keep us all safe. While I acknowledge the need to keep our families together during this time of separation, we cannot afford to have one person carry the virus through our borders."

He said Te Marae Ora will arrange contact with a New Zealand Health Quarantine Manager who will arrange accommodation for supervised quarantine with meals and services, as well as access to health care providers.

The Prime Minister reiterated that before someone can enter the Cook Islands, they must be tested for COVID-19. Only those with negative results will receive medical clearance to travel. Those with existing chronic medical conditions will need to be assessed by a health care provider.

Some people may qualify for Cook Islands government assistance, he said.

The Prime Minister acknowledged that many people were feeling worried about COVID-19. "It's important during these challenging times that we look after our wellbeing and the wellbeing of our anau," he said. "It's normal to worry - it's understandable at a time like this to feel anxious about what's happening. Remember we're in this together. Be kind and look out for each other. You can do

this; we can do this."

Puna are set up to provide support and to help people look after their mental health and well-being during this crisis and beyond.

The Prime Minister also expressed his gratitude to the Government of New Zealand for providing \$7 million support towards the Cook Islands COVID-19 response. "This generous gesture will benefit all Cook Islanders as we stand by your side to alleviate the impact caused by COVID-19."

Remember to keep checking www.covid19.gov.ck for regular updates

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