



Government of the Cook Islands
Te Kauono Tutara e te Mana Tiaki
Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Immigration

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Stranded Cook Islands residents to complete lockdown period in New Zealand



Cook Islands Prime Minister, Hon. Henry Puna, today announced Cook Islands residents stranded in New Zealand, would remain in New Zealand for the duration of its four-week lockdown and movement restrictions to help break the chain of the COVID-19 spread.

Prime Minister Puna said that due to the rapidly-changing situation in New Zealand and its fast-moving policy issues and responses, the proposed 14-day supervised quarantine option in Auckland for stranded Cook Islands residents was no longer possible. The supervised quarantine policy was designed by key Health professionals under the Cook Islands Government's Emergency Incident Management Group, in an extensive effort to help all Cook Islanders affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.

“Things are moving very quickly in New Zealand and the Alert Level 4 measures mean people must stay where they are and not interact with anyone outside their current household. The measures are a response to a new crisis unlike anything seen before in our lifetime. Governments around the world are having to be nimble and adapt to changing circumstances by the minute. In trying to protect the Cook Islands while simultaneously looking after Cook Islanders and residents currently in New Zealand, decisions and plans are made that will sometimes require adjustment,” said Prime Minister Puna.

“We appreciate that our people will have to make alternative arrangements which are both stressful and financially difficult, so we will elevate and expedite provision of financial and other assistance in the coming days led by our Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and delivered through the Cook Islands High Commission in Wellington,” said Prime Minister Puna.

The Alert Level 4 lockdown measures will help contain the spread of COVID-19 in New Zealand, but is also an additional layer of protection for the Cook Islands. Prime Minister Puna said he had liaised with New Zealand's Deputy Prime Minister, Hon. Winston Peters. “Hon. Peters acknowledged the approach taken by the Cook Islands to keep out and also prepare

for the threat of COVID-19. He said that one of New Zealand's top priorities is protecting the people of the Pacific and this was at the forefront of their minds," said Prime Minister Puna.

Finally, Prime Minister Puna stated "The breaking news yesterday of New Zealand's first fatality due to COVID-19 and its confirmed cases now exceeding 500, were a sobering reminder of the threat COVID-19 presents and the importance of our collective actions to break the chain of transmission. The Cook Islands stands in solidarity with New Zealand".

Information relating to support for Cook Islands residents needing to remain in New Zealand for the period of the lockdown will continue to be issued by Te Kauono Tutara e te Mana Tiaki – the Cook Islands Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Immigration and delivered through the Cook Islands High Commission. Some 200 Cook Islands residents have already registered with the High Commission, others yet to are encouraged to do so.

Photo: *L-R: Cook Islands Prime Minister Hon. Henry Puna; New Zealand Prime Minister Rt. Hon. Jacinda Ardern and New Zealand Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Rt. Hon. Winston Peters during the State Visit of Prime Minister Ardern to the Cook Islands in 2018*

End.