



Office of the Prime Minister
Press Release

PRESS RELEASE

15 March 2020

Official Statement – Increased border measures for COVID-19

EMBARGOED UNTIL 4PM

Today Prime Minister Henry Puna announced increased border measures designed to further protect the health of the people of the Cook Islands from pandemic Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19).

“Cabinet convened a special meeting yesterday to consider further steps to protect our people. As a result of that meeting, we have expanded Cook Islands’ border restrictions.

“From tomorrow, anyone intending to enter Rarotonga from any country with the exception of New Zealand is required to self-quarantine for 14 days in New Zealand. This includes Cook Islanders returning from countries other than New Zealand. This enhanced border measure will be in place until 18 April 2020 and is subject to weekly review.

“Flights from French Polynesia, Australia and the United States are postponed until 18 April 2020 and are also subject to weekly review.

“A temporary ban on all cruise ships, pleasure crafts and yachts entering Cook Islands waters will be effective from tomorrow and at this stage through to 30 June 2020, subject to weekly review.

“It is important to note that cargo boats and planes will still be able to enter our ports and our supply chain of products will not be affected.

“As a result of these interventions the Cook Islands will strengthen their border restrictions. We believe interventions like these coupled with our people becoming well versed with social distancing practises are our best hope in minimising the impact COVID-19 will have on our country and on our people.

“On behalf of Cabinet and indeed the people of the Cook Islands I would like to thank Prime Minister Ardern and her government for the leadership they have shown. Following her COVID-19 Cabinet committee meeting last Saturday, Prime Minister Ardern said New Zealand has a responsibility to look after the Pacific Islands and that they take very seriously their duty of care, and for that may I say, on behalf of the people of the Cook Islands, we are grateful.

“The border restriction steps New Zealand is implementing gives the Cook Islands an additional layer of protection and more time to prepare for “not if, but when” COVID-19 arrives.

“Alongside these border restrictions Cabinet is also encouraging Cook Islanders to avoid all non-essential travel overseas. Leading by example Government employees will be advised to cancel all international travel duty, effective tomorrow, unless an exemption is provided on the advice of Te Marae Ora Cook Islands Ministry of Health.

“My government is adding another layer of protection to the outer islands (including Aitutaki) of the Cook Islands, our Pa Enea, by closing their borders effective Saturday 21 March, after then there will be a voluntary 14 day supervised quarantine for anyone wishing to travel to the Pa Enea.

“As I have said before, the success of the Cook Islands national response relies on everyone working together to protect population health and minimise disruption to essential services. Now is the time to prepare, we are all in this together” says Puna.

For Health-related questions or concerns please visit www.health.gov.ck or contact the Healthline on 29 667.

To view the Cook Islands Emergency Response Plan to COVID-19, go to: https://www.health.gov.ck/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/CookIslandsEmergencyResponsePlanCOVID19_Mar2020.pdf

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