**Covid-19 and Islands**

***Cook Islands***

1. What actions are being taken to protect the island community from Covid 19? In particular, how are travel restrictions being put in place and enforced?

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| Respondent | Date | Response |
| Roderic Browne  [rodericbrowne@yahoo.com](mailto:rodericbrowne@yahoo.com) | 22 April 2020 | Social distancing, over 70's have care at their homes, shopping one person per family, schools now open, most tourists have gone home and no incoming. |
| Maureen Hilyard  [maureen.hilyard@gmail.com](mailto:maureen.hilyard@gmail.com)  Cook Islands Internet Action Group (CIIAG) |  | The Cook Islands is a protectorate of New Zealand and we have been fortunate not to have recorded an instance of covid-19 on the main island or on an outer island, so that we are absolutely covid-free and want to stay that way. Before covid-19 erupted globally, we had up to 4 flights a day coming from New Zealand (with one flight a week coming from Australia and one from Tahiti). These stopped nearly 8 weeks ago after which flights with passengers were banned, and only one flight per week is allowed for cargo runs and returning to NZ with overseas tourists who were finally able to book a flight to their home destination without having to leave the airport transit lounge in Auckland. If they left the airport they would have had to stay in lockdown for 4 weeks. I returned to Rarotonga after 5 weeks off island at a conference in Melbourne and then Auckland for 4 weeks. On my return to the Cook Islands, the government had just the day before instituted a 2 week self-isolation rule. Even with the recent relaxation of the return of locals on our once a week flights, those in NZ who have completed 4 weeks of NZ lockdown, will still also have to complete a further 2 weeks of supervised isolation in a local hotel reserved by the government, on their return to Rarotonga and before they could return to their families. Its pretty tight but we don't want to risk having the virus on our island. |

1. What actions will be taken should people on the island have Covid 19?

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| Respondent | Date | Response |
| Roderic Browne  [rodericbrowne@yahoo.com](mailto:rodericbrowne@yahoo.com) | 22 April 2020 | * I believe there is some sort of hospital with medical staff. * With foreign passport you must self-medicate. * Dengi fever is a problem. |
| Maureen Hilyard  [maureen.hilyard@gmail.com](mailto:maureen.hilyard@gmail.com)  Cook Islands Internet Action Group (CIIAG) |  | Anyone who notices any changes in their temperature or coughing behaviour is urged to contact the hospital or one of the 0800 numbers that was distributed at the outset of covid notices if people noticed anything untoward, healthwise. Despite no covid cases being on the island at the moment, these warnings are still given in case of any risk of latent infection. |

1. What actions are being taken to ensure that essential goods and services are provided to the island community?

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| Respondent | Date | Response |
| Roderic Browne  [rodericbrowne@yahoo.com](mailto:rodericbrowne@yahoo.com) | 22 April 2020 | Sea and Air freight mostly still maintained. |
| Maureen Hilyard  [maureen.hilyard@gmail.com](mailto:maureen.hilyard@gmail.com)  Cook Islands Internet Action Group (CIIAG) |  | Essential goods and services have been kept open on the island - our one supermarket only allows 10 people in the store at a time, and the 2 metre distancing is insisted on, sanitisers have to be used before entering; pharmacies, local grocery stores and bakeries and petrol stations which also sell groceries, all have sanitiser stations on entry and limit the entry of people (usually on or two) onto their premises. A few restaurants are open but with fewer tables - supporting social distancing. |
| Pasha Carruthers  University of the South Pacific/Consultant  [pashraro@gmail.com](mailto:pashraro@gmail.com) | 8 May 2020 | Puna (electoral districts) committees were reestablished and given training, conducted community surveys - a flag system was enacted depicting elderly, ill etc, , assigned a nurse by ministry of health and delegated some policing responsibilities, did outreach to the vulnerable. Assisted with tasks like grocery and pharmacy errands. . Red Cross, NZ High Com and private sector contributed to hygiene and food parcels that were delivered by the Puna committees. Now flu shots are also being administered to over 60s. |

1. What actions are being taken to ensure that people working on the islands, not only in the tourism sector, are sustained financially in the short term and in the long term?

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| Respondent | Date | Response |
| Roderic Browne  [rodericbrowne@yahoo.com](mailto:rodericbrowne@yahoo.com) | 22 April 2020 | Minimum financial assistance. |
| Maureen Hilyard  [maureen.hilyard@gmail.com](mailto:maureen.hilyard@gmail.com)  Cook Islands Internet Action Group (CIIAG) |  | Our island only has a population of about 14,000. The lack of tourists make the main township look deserted. This also means that there is not much employment. The government is providing a $61million economic response to COVID-19. For a small island, it is hardly something we can really afford, but it is to support our people in response to, and to mitigate, the effects of COVID-19. If we actually had the virus on the island, maybe this would not have been enough, but for now it is helping families as well as providing a wage subsidy for businesses to keep paying their workers a minimum wage until such time as they can start working again. Employers of those who are still working (in essential services) are expected to make up their full wages on top of this subsidy. However, because we are currently covid-free, non-tourism businesses are starting to return slowly. |
| Pasha Carruthers  University of the South Pacific/Consultant  [pashraro@gmail.com](mailto:pashraro@gmail.com) | 8 May 2020 | Short term stimulus package - one time $3000 business grant to sole traders, Slightly larger one off grants (up to 15K) to other businesses depending on previous year turnover 3 months of minimimum wage subsidy to those businesses who can prove they have a 30% or more reduction in income each month since March relative to 2019. 4 weeks unemployment benefit (Cook Islands has not had an unemployment benefit before) to those who are retrenched.- The Power supply company has given free electricity for residential users for the average bill over the past year, and a 60% discount to commercial users. Telephone/internet company has given 50% off postpaid (accounts), until June. |

1. What actions are being taken to ensure the mental well-being of people on the islands?

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| Respondent | Date | Response |
| Maureen Hilyard  [maureen.hilyard@gmail.com](mailto:maureen.hilyard@gmail.com)  Cook Islands Internet Action Group (CIIAG) |  | Although our Health system does little extra in the area of mental health, the government and private sector organisations have added their support by helping people not to feel as stressed as they possibly could be in this situation. Families were offered $100 per child each fortnight to have to keep them at home during the school closures; parents were given the work subsidy; electricity is being paid from March to May by the Electricity company; Vodafone has offered to pay half domestic phone bills for 3 months from March to May. A welfare payment is available for the elderly, sick and destitute. Business owners are also entitled to similar benefits plus a training subsidy to upskill workers during the WFH situation. |
| Pasha Carruthers  University of the South Pacific/Consultant  [pashraro@gmail.com](mailto:pashraro@gmail.com) | 8 May 2020 | Private Sector task force has been promoting a series of well being workshops (Survive and Thrive), not sure what uptake is like. The initial government support above has helped a lot, as has our covid19 free status |

1. If you consider it appropriate, feel free to share any data about people who have Covid 19 on your island and of people who, sadly, have passed away because of Covid 19.

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| Respondent | Date | Response |
| Pasha Carruthers  University of the South Pacific/Consultant  [pashraro@gmail.com](mailto:pashraro@gmail.com) | 8 May 2020 | [Cook islands COVID website](http://www.covid19.gov.ck) has all the official government statements. Cook Islands News and Radio Cook Islands sites have regular reports |

1. If applicable, how are lockdown measures being relaxed?

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| Respondent | Date | Response |
| Maureen Hilyard  [maureen.hilyard@gmail.com](mailto:maureen.hilyard@gmail.com)  Cook Islands Internet Action Group (CIIAG) |  | In the first week of May, the Cook Islands Health Ministry relaxed some restrictions. allowing school children to return to school, shops and restaurants to open, but still with social distancing and sanitisers in use before entering retail outlets. No contact sports allowed although they are running quikrip for primary students and modified touch rugby for adults. |
| Pasha Carruthers  University of the South Pacific/Consultant  [pashraro@gmail.com](mailto:pashraro@gmail.com) | 8 May 2020 | Our country is now considered to be one large bubble, with almost all businesses allowed to operate. We went through a couple weeks gradual relaxing of stay at home orders and limitations on gatherings of more than 10. The exception is alcohol licencees - they have to provide Ministry of Transport with a floor plan and narrative report outlining how they will maintain physical distancing and hygiene practices and the liquor licence board and police are showing reluctance to allow reopening of bars and nightclubs. Meanwhile churches/schools etc are all pretty much back to normal. And only a few (mostly younger) people have resisted return to cultural greetings of cheek kisses and hugs, with no physical distancing. Mamas and papas still all do this. |

1. Is there anything else you want to share?

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| Respondent | Date | Response |
| Pasha Carruthers  University of the South Pacific/Consultant  [pashraro@gmail.com](mailto:pashraro@gmail.com) | 8 May 2020 | Domestic tourism is possible now, and there has been quite a bit of interest from Rarotongans to go to Aitutaki and Aitutakians to come to Rarotonga, Air Rarotonga our domestic airline has partnered with hotels and offered special deals. Other islands flights require people to register interest and will fly once a planeload is reached. |

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*This information has been collated by the Strathclyde Centre for Environmental Law and Governance in collaboration with Island Innovation and can be found at* [*https://www.strath.ac.uk/research/strathclydecentreenvironmentallawgovernance/ourwork/research/labsincubators/eilean/islandsandcovid-19/*](https://www.strath.ac.uk/research/strathclydecentreenvironmentallawgovernance/ourwork/research/labsincubators/eilean/islandsandcovid-19/)*.*