



REPUBLIC OF NAURU  
Government Information Office

**CORONAVIRUS UPDATE**  
**by**  
**His Excellency President Lionel Aingimea**

Saturday, 9 May 2020

President Lionel Aingimea has addressed speculation circulating in relation to an incident of flight crew from a freighter plane testing positive for coronavirus.

On Friday, 8 May, around 6.30pm a freighter plane landed with five crew members. The crew did not disembark however health officials boarded the plane to conduct routine health screening at the front of the plane in the galley. The health screening includes questions for symptoms, a temperature check, observation for other signs such as tiredness, as well as a rapid diagnostic test for antibodies against coronavirus.

As a result, one of the members of the crew had a positive rapid coronavirus test. A positive rapid test indicates that the person has likely been infected at some time.

However, these rapid tests are not as accurate as the proper lab tests and the rapid test does not tell us when a person was infected or whether they are still contagious.

A formal laboratory test is needed which will clarify whether a person is still carrying the virus or whether they have cleared the infection.

Regardless, the plane, its crew and remaining cargo were swiftly returned to Brisbane as advised by health travel restrictions under such circumstances.

A joint decision and measures were consequently made by the Deputy Secretary for Health Dr Ola Ajayi, Director for Public Health Stacey Cain and the head of the Nauru Coronavirus Taskforce Dr Kieren Keke, to immediately stop further unloading of cargo, ground staff advised to refrain from making contact with the crew, and the three health officials moved to an isolation area within the airport and subsequently placed in isolation at the Meneñ Hotel. No other person was in contact with the crew.

Initial discovery of this result is indication that Nauru's capture and contain policy is working very well.

Some cargo in the lower cargo hold of the plane had already been unloaded and deemed safe.

President Aingimea said as this particular crew member did not show any signs or symptoms is initial indication of a strong immune system that is able to fight back the virus, but confirms further testing in Brisbane will be undertaken.

The President underscored that Queensland health received the crew but “didn’t panic”, instead advised the crew go into self-isolation and await further testing on Monday in Brisbane.

On arrival into Brisbane, the plane and its cargo were disinfected and cleared to resume flights. Nauru Airlines is making arrangements to bring back the remaining cargo either on Sunday or Monday.

The President adds this is not the time to panic, blame others or hurl abuse. Instead encourages support and to seek spiritual guidance for Nauru and other countries that are seriously affected.

“Your government asks, let’s get together to basically make a positive impact [in our] fight against coronavirus.”

President Aingimea expressed sincere thanks to Australian Border Force (ABF) and Queensland health authorities for accepting Nauru’s request to allow Nauru Airlines to return with the crew and cargo on board.

Additionally, the President stated that leading health journals and the World Health Organisation (WHO) have recently suggested a shift in quarantine procedures, which proposes Nauru could begin moving from the prescribed quarantine time and into lab testing.

President Aingimea said Nauru is moving progressively in the right direction and the government will be rolling out the Response Plan next week that will set the direction regarding COVID-19; further stating that Nauru already has testing facilities, and lab technicians undergoing training on the test machine, with the possibility of being able to commence testing next week, “shows us we’re moving in the right direction.”

The President once again assures the Nauruan public there is no case of coronavirus on Nauru and the government will continue its capture and contain policy.

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Issued by:

Nauru Government Information Office, Republic of NAURU

Ph: +(674) 557 3009 E: [gjo.nauru@gmail.com](mailto:gjo.nauru@gmail.com) / [naurugovinfo@gmail.com](mailto:naurugovinfo@gmail.com) / [www.naurugov.nr](http://www.naurugov.nr)