



# Nauru Bulletin

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## Nauru remains coronavirus-free

***Nauru's 'capture and contain' strategy continues to succeed***

Due to the decisive and proactive actions of the Aingimea Government, its 'capture & contain' strategy continues to succeed in its goal to keep Nauru COVID-19 free.

Over the last two weeks, a total of four quarantined residents registered fevers and were subsequently moved from the transit stations after arriving on Nauru for further observation as their samples were sent away for testing in Australia. All results have returned negative.

Two COVID-19 testing machines are now on island; testing kits are due any day, and online virtual training will prepare health staff in their operation, delivering test results within days, not weeks.

The Australian Government is now actively conducting temperature checks at Australian airports for all departing passengers which President Lionel Aingimea says is another line of defence for Nauru.

Community Liaison Officers (CLO), whom the President appointed as authorised officers on 20 March under the National Disaster Risk Management Act 2016, received training early April by the Department of Justice on COVID-19 regulations, rules for the designated residences (Budapest and Meneñ Hotel) and what the powers are of authorised officers.

CLOs are part of the Nauru Police Force and therefore have powers to carry out duties and responsibilities to protect the residents in quarantine and the public. Their role is vital in keeping the community safe.

### ***Repatriation efforts successful***

This week, the Government successfully brokered an agreement with the Fiji Government to repatriate Nauruans from Fiji, beginning with those residing in the Western division of Nadi, Lautoka and Sigatoka as Suva residents wait out the city's two week lockdown.



*The Coronavirus Coordinating Committee meet regularly to update and formulate plans for the ongoing management and minimisation of the impact of coronavirus*

The President said there was support from a number of people including the Secretary General of the Pacific Islands Forum, Dame Meg Taylor, enabling Nauru Airlines to do the flight.

Nauru also responded to a request from neighbouring governments to also repatriate their weightlifters from Noumea as well as consider uplifting Marshall Islands students from Fiji.

### ***Price regulation and hoarding addressed***

President Aingimea issued a price regulation order prohibiting hoarding and price inflation on 21 March, under the Prices Regulation Act 2008. The order is in force for three months.

As advised by the Finance Secretary and approved by Cabinet, traders are not permitted to increase the existing wholesale or retail prices of everyday essential goods, nor hoard or withhold these items from sale. Contraventions of the order attract fines of up to \$3000 or six months imprisonment.

'Existing wholesale or retail price' implies the price of goods and services sold on or immediately before 16 March 2020.

### ***The public's role***

President Aingimea has continued to be mindful of the vital role the public play during a state of disaster, urging the public early on to be responsible on the roads, adding that alcohol-related incidents place unnecessary strain on the health system at this time. This is supported by police road blitzes targeting drink driving.

In addition, public servants are asked to volunteer their time to health, if they are able. Thus far, volunteers across finance, human resources, parliament and the police have responded to the call, working as required in clerical, stock, technical and taskforce roles. According to Acting Director of Public Health Stacey Cain, the work is "more like a secondment to health with benefits of new experiences, amongst others" for those willing volunteers.

Schools remain open and people are urged to continue their hygiene practices, already in place in work places, including social distancing and additional disinfecting and cleaning measures.

The President has also addressed abusive behaviour by members of the public passing designated quarantine residences with a reminder that under the State of Disaster Regulations, penalties of up to \$50,000 and five years in prison apply for such actions.

"We are a small community and these people are family and friends and we must care for them and protect them as they wait out their quarantine time."

Collective actions over the short and longer term, says the President, will help keep us all safe.

### ***Supplies are secure***

The freighter service continues its weekly service.

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Strict controls are in place for freighter flights, with all cargo fumigated upon arrival and prior to handling by ground staff.

Shipping company Neptune advised a cargo ship delay until early May prompting President Aingimea to reassure Nauruans that sufficient food and supplies are available on island, with any shortages imported by freighter plane.

Fuel (petrol and diesel) supply is at sufficient levels and the next fuel ship is due in May.

### **Stop fake news**

President Aingimea is warning against fake news circulating on social media about positive cases of coronavirus on Nauru, urging the public

## Financial literacy with focus groups

Financial literacy training is opening up deeper understanding of money management and generally being 'money smart'.

The team carrying out the focus group discussions has completed 14 focus groups from the different communities, community leaders, youth and sports organisations.

As previously reported in the *Nauru Bulletin*, this financial literacy program is the Nauru Government's effort to enhance financial sector policy, strengthen financial inclusion and financial sector development on Nauru.

In this regard, the Government sought technical assistance from the Asian Development Bank (ADB) with the assistance of Australian NGO Good Return to implement the program. The Planning and Aid Division of the Department of Finance, and the Department of Commerce, Industry and Environment are the government's implementing partners. The program also has agreements with other interested organisations.

The year-long project is aimed at improving financial literacy among the population, with particular focus on improving the ability of local communities to manage their finances in order to save and invest for the future.

The focus group discussions commenced on Monday 23 March with community leaders.

Project Coordinator Romys Eobob said the groups were selected with a homogenous requirement, and developed into some mixed gender groups as they formed.

"What stood out to me is that the majority of participants (male and female) relied on their jobs as their source of income to support their households," Ms Eobob said.

"I also observed that the older generation of Nauruans (40+) were familiar with nearly all the financial products and services we presented.

"The aim of the project is to design and pilot a community coaching program in financial literacy by the end of 2020," Ms Eobob said.

At the start of each session, an introduction to the session was made and participants introduced themselves and identified their sources of income.

A session was also dedicated for contestants of the recent Miss Nauru pageant which heard a varied level of understanding money management from domestic and personal spending.

When asked who they would borrow money from, the majority preferred to borrow from family and friends because they were

to report fake news to the police.

Cases are currently under police investigation, guided by Nauru's Cyber Crimes Act 2015, in relation to persons posting false news about coronavirus on Facebook.

The President warned the spreading of fake news on social media is likened to calling a bomb threat at an airport, "you will be arrested."

From the very beginning of the COVID-19 outbreak and throughout, the Government of Nauru has not been complacent but prepared, organised and strategic in its approach, seeking expertise, making informed decisions and putting in place regulatory measures using pre-existing legislation, to maintain a country free from COVID-19 •



*Project coordinator Romys Eobob (top right) leads focus group discussions on financial literacy*

negotiable, while some did not understand the interest applied by loan sharks and the exorbitant interest it attracts which is expected to be repaid each pay day.

The focus group discussions are the primary methodology used here to gain information about participant views and experiences on financial literacy, their understanding, attitudes and beliefs and financial behaviours.

Different exercise charts were laid out for participants to identify where they would spend their income the most; who is the decision maker; what is the family money pool spent on; how does one prepare for unexpected events such as a death or job loss.

Some general questions that were asked included the process of opening a bank account, fees charged by the different ATMs, who are grievances directed to when, for instance, the ATMs run out of cash to dispense. One of the younger focus groups suggested they would turn to social media to vent their grievance rather than talk directly with anyone from the bank, as this is seen as instant, gauges public response and less confronting.

One of the completed research activities is the Demand-Side Survey covering 10 per cent of the population to understand the current demand, availability, and suitability of financial products and services in Nauru across key demographics.

The program is currently at the learner needs and resource assessment (LNRA) which is a crucial stage in the process of designing and developing curriculum content as well as in the implementation of the proposed financial literacy training.

The results from these studies will be used to help design and deliver tailor-made financial capability training later in the year that addresses the identified literacy and capability gaps, and is accessible to Nauruans in every demographic •

## Government shoulders containment responsibility

In the wake of the coronavirus pandemic, the Nauru Government is shouldering much of the financial shortfalls to cover urgent unforeseen expenditure such as that related to the pandemic.

The fiscal cash buffer is set up to meet such circumstances. It performs an important function in the annual estimates, as it is used to cover unexpected expenditure related to ‘finance – other payments’, such as subsidies to State Owned Enterprises (SOEs).

Secretary for Finance Novena Itsimaera says at the time the budget is developed, it is not possible to always know everything about what Government might wish to spend money on for the whole year.

“To manage this uncertainty, provision is made in the fiscal cash buffer to be reallocated as required through the year,” Ms Itsimaera said.

“The government has sufficient funds available to it to meet the expected costs of the response to the pandemic.

“This funding is sourced from a re-prioritisation of existing budget measures where expenditure is no longer expected to occur this financial year, and from donor contributions.”

Rather than expect individuals to self-isolate, the government chose managed quarantine and therefore set up three designated residences as quarantine stations for any new arrivals to Nauru - a proactive measure the government took ahead of any confirmed cases on the island to protect and minimise the impact of coronavirus, if and when it reaches Nauru’s shores.

Nauru remains one of the few countries left in the world to be unaffected by coronavirus.

With donor support, the government is bearing all associated costs to run, repair and fund the accommodation, meals, cleaning and security for all the residents in quarantine as well as keep its public servants held in quarantine on full salaries.

The 2019-2020 cash buffer started off with an allocation of \$2.5 million. Additional funding was received through the year and some funds reallocated to other sub-divisions.



*Secretary for Finance Novena Itsimaera says the cash buffer is reallocated as required throughout the year*

Most recently, \$3 million was reallocated to top-up the contingency fund to cover immediate health and quarantine costs related to the coronavirus pandemic. The Government is using this fund now to support its immediate response.

To support Nauru manage the coronavirus pandemic, donor pledges have been received from the Asian Development Bank (ADB), Australia, New Zealand, Taiwan, India and Japan.

These pledges are expected to support health and quarantine costs as well as broader economic recovery measures.

“The Government has sufficient liquidity to meet its budgeted expenditure to the end of the financial year on 30 June 2020 and beyond. This includes a cash buffer of up to two months non-RPC related expenditures,” Ms Itsimaera said.

The main sources of Government revenue are fees related to the Regional Processing Centre, revenues from selling fishing licences and other services, taxes on businesses and employees, and customs excises.

Donor contributions that are not direct budget support are managed through a different process, outlined in the Development Fund Act 2011.

These funds will be disbursed to reimburse government expenditure consistent with the development funding agreement negotiated with donors •

## Nauru receives \$320K ADB grant for COVID-19

Nauru will receive a grant of US\$320,000 from the Asian Development Bank (ADB) to assist the country in its response to the COVID-19 global pandemic, it was announced 1 April.

The grant has been made available through the ADB’s Asia Pacific Disaster Response Fund, and is worth a total of US\$1.53 million, with three other countries also recipients. The Federated States of Micronesia (FSM) will receive US\$470,000, with the Marshall Islands and Tuvalu each receiving US\$370,000.

According to the ADB’s media statement, “the scale of the emergency declared in each country is beyond the capacity of each government and health sector to meet the immediate expenses needed for adequate public health services.”



ADB Health Specialist for the Pacific Ki Fung Kelvin Lam assured grant recipient countries that “ADB will ensure these grants are swiftly disbursed to allow each country to respond as quickly as possible to their emergency situations.”

The US\$1.53 million in grants is separate from the US\$6.5 billion aid package for Asia and the Pacific that ADB announced on 18 March in response to the COVID-19 pandemic •

## Q-time ends for first cohort

The first cohort of Nauru's quarantined travellers is released back into the general population Saturday, 4 April after 14 days in isolation at the Budapest Hotel at Anabar.

In that time, they have had over 40 temperature checks recorded by onsite nursing staff at the 24/7 nursing station.

The cohort of 52, aged from zero to 82 years, includes mostly Nauruan citizens willingly contributing to activities such as fitness classes, a children's handwashing education station, a daily story time session, and much more, keeping spirits high and the general atmosphere of the centre positive, cheerful, purposeful and productive.

Onsite wi-fi allows guest to work remotely and access the internet.

Eigigu Solutions Corporation's (ESC) site manager Phil Togamalo supervises all onsite operations including overseeing a range of service contractors, the health team, ESC cleaning and security teams and catering to the needs of guests.

"Safety is my priority, and people's health. Especially with the elderly, I try to make them feel very comfortable where they are," Mr Togamalo said.

Mr Togomalo has worked with the various Australian refugee regional processing contractors for many years in logistics, housekeeping and environment, promoted to supervisory roles and trained for the work he now undertakes.

Leading up to and during the first fortnight of operations, the Budapest Hotel underwent repairs and renovations. An extra line of fencing, pergolas and two huts from the Aiue Boulevard were installed, and a concrete slab laid as an outdoor exercise area.

Doors, door handles and common walkways are disinfected twice a day, with a comprehensive clean and fumigation of each room over the weekend.

Midway through the quarantine period, children from the AOG church congregation and the SmartKids children's group visited for worship and later for a movie night organised by the ESC team.

A quarantine bingo challenge relieves the boredom and isolation as guests play evenings in the doorways of their accommodation, with many prizes donated.

Government and stakeholders across Nauru have cooperated to create a smart and safe COVID-19 capture and contain system; health, police, ESC logistics, Central Meridian constructions, Canstruct catering, community library, AOG church, SmartKids and Rotary Club of Nauru, Australian High Commission with educational materials, Digicel, the Anabar community and of course, the support of families and friends of those quarantined.

The next cohort arrived Friday, 3 April to begin their 14 day isolation at the Meneñ Hotel, ensuring Nauru continues to remain COVID-19-free •

### Coronavirus Alert:

If you have a fever, cough, breathing difficulties and travel history, you must self-isolate at home and call

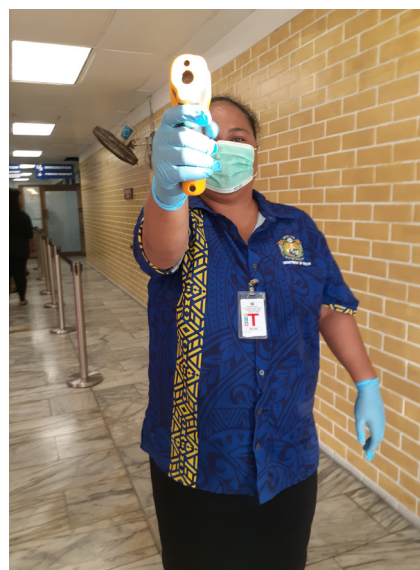
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## WHO pacific COVID-19 web page launched

The Pacific region now has a dedicated *Pacific Island Information on COVID-19* webpage launched Tuesday, 31 March.

According to Nauru-based WHO non-communicable diseases (NCD) technical advisor Dr Lusiana Manoa, the page was developed by WHO Western Pacific risk communications team, working since early January to ensure Pacific nations' COVID-19 preparedness.

The page contains training and technical guidance on critical preparedness, readiness and response actions for COVID-19, which takes in disease surveillance and quarantine, infection prevention and laboratory processes, procurement of personal protective equipment (PPE) and public communications.



*Health staff perform temperature checks for all arrivals to Nauru and those in designated quarantine accommodation*

"Public Health department are continuing outreach visit follow up for high risk NCD patients (principally diabetes, hypertension and their complications such as amputees and renal failure) in the community daily, and we are grateful for Digicel text blast messaging which has included 'Coronavirus alert: If you have underlying health conditions like diabetes, heart disease, TB, etc. Please comply with your medications,' almost daily from 18 March.

"As a team we are committed to ensuring that we protect the most vulnerable in our communities, and ensure care continuity. I must thank all the staff for their passion and commitment to serving the people of Nauru," Dr Manoa said.

The web page will allow Nauruans to access regular, up-to-date and, importantly, accurate information and education, including Pacific and global situation reports, news, and a 'Situation Dashboard' feature with updated world map showing country case numbers, cases by date of report and cumulative case graph.

At the time of publication, the dashboard lists 1,282,931 confirmed COVID-19 cases, with 72,774 deaths in 211 countries.

Save <https://www.who.int/westernpacific/emergencies/covid-19> to favourites for ready reference •

# NORI acquires new deep sea ship

The parent company of Nauru Ocean Resources Inc. (NORI) - DeepGreen Metals has partnered with Allseas group to add another ship for the purpose of deep-sea polymetallic nodule collection.

The former drilling ship will be converted to a polymetallic nodule collection vessel, which will enable the deployment at sea of a four kilometre-long riser to recover polymetallic nodules from the ocean floor.

The Government of Nauru sponsors DeepGreen’s polymetallic nodule exploration rights in the Clarion Clipperton Zone through Nauru Ocean Resources Inc (NORI).

DeepGreen Chairman and CEO Gerard Barron explained how important NORI’s contribution is to environmentally responsible and sustainable minerals collection and extraction in the years to come.

“The green transition is going to require hundreds of millions of tonnes of nickel, copper and cobalt, and our research shows that ocean polymetallic nodules could provide society with these critical minerals at a fraction of the environmental and social impacts associated with land-based extraction.”

In a media statement, Allseas President Edward Heerema expressed the company’s enthusiasm to be involved in DeepGreen’s operation, adding that “Deep-sea polymetallic



*DeepGreen Metal partnered with Allseas to add another ship for deep-sea polymetallic nodule collection*

nodule collection represents a new frontier and a new exciting chapter in Allseas’ history. With our offshore expertise and innovative capability, we can develop creative technical solutions for this new industry.”

Allseas Group S.A. employs 4,000 people globally. Its core business is offshore pipeline installation and subsea construction.

The nodules contain high grades of nickel, manganese, copper and cobalt—key metals required for building electric vehicle batteries and renewable energy technologies.

Nodule extraction is set to commence mid-2021 •



## COVID-19 Alert • Reduce your risk of coronavirus infection

Hand wash regularly with soap and use hand sanitiser.

Cover your mouth and nose with a flexed elbow or tissue when coughing and sneezing.

Use disinfectant to regularly wipe desks, tables and objects like phones and keyboards.

If you have underlying health conditions like diabetes, heart disease, TB etc., please comply with your medications.

Smoking damages your lungs and other parts of your body and may increase your risk of getting a severe case of coronavirus.

Disallow smoking in your homes. Secondhand smoke also causes respiratory damage.

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**Republic of Nauru**

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