

**SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE HON. PRIME MINISTER, FIAME NAOMI MATAAFA**

**Samoa remains at Alert Level Two (orange) for another two (2) weeks with amendments; (Monday 02<sup>nd</sup> May 2022)**



Good evening Samoa,

It has been seven weeks since the detection of our first community case transmission on March 17th 2022. The latest figures from the Ministry of Health confirm that our total number of positive cases both in the community and those detected at the border is 9,592. There were 73 cases found at the border upon arrival in Samoa, and nine thousand, five hundred and twelve (9,512) confirmed community cases since the 17th of March.

The Ministry of Health also confirmed 3 new deaths over the last 48 hours, taking the number of deaths to 19. Out of the 202 patients admitted to the isolation wards at Moto'otua hospital, most have been discharged. About 65,949 rapid antigen tests have been administered. As of current, 11 patients are in isolation wards and one in ICU.

Our vaccination rates are commendable, our efforts are continuing well through the leadership of the Ministry of Health, working closely with the Disaster Advisory Committee and our communities. To date, 92.6% of the age group 18 years and above have completed two doses. Among this age group, 70,439 booster doses have been administered.

For the age group 12-17 years old, 86.6% have completed two doses. And for the age group 5-11 years old, 58.7% have completed two doses. The second dose for all children from 5-11 years old will commence this week following the receipt of the pediatric vaccines from New Zealand over the weekend.

The severe symptoms of the virus have been felt all over the world and have resulted in hospitalization and deaths. We have experienced similar outcomes in Samoa. The lives of 19 people that have been lost due to COVID 19 related complications, is a sad reality of the virus. On behalf of the Government I extend our deepest condolences to the families, relatives and children of those who have lost their battles to COVID 19. May you all be comforted in your loss of loved ones.

Cabinet this afternoon considered recommendations from the Disaster Advisory Committee. The deliberations took into account the current status of our efforts to contain the spread of the virus, and to minimize the severity of cases through our continuing drive for vaccination. Cabinet has also considered the reopening of schools based on the recommendations from the Committee as well as amending business opening hours.

Further, Cabinet considered the plan for reopening of our international borders. Critical to this decision are the current rates of our vaccination program, amendments to quarantine conditions and the opening of borders of our neighboring countries, like Australia and Fiji as well as New Zealand in October this year.

In this connection, Cabinet this afternoon approved the continuation of Alert level two (orange) for another two (2) weeks with amendments as follows.

1. The National University of Samoa to resume classes as planned early this month. Secondary primary and early childhood education schools will gradually reopen during May, upon Cabinet's consideration of a scheduled plan from the Education sector on the resumption of all schools.
2. Business opening hours are now extended from 6am to 10pm from Monday to Saturday. The curfew starts from 11pm to 6am of the next day where only authorized personnel and vehicles are allowed on the roads.
3. For Sunday, business hours are from 12pm to 10pm at night.

4. Public gatherings, including church services are open but public is encouraged to maintain social distancing, wearing of facial masks and showing of vaccination cards.
5. Resume international flights from this month (May) for all our citizens travelling to Samoa for various purposes, and all those who are contracted to work in Samoa.
6. Opening of international borders in August - September 2022.

The details of these amendments to our State of Emergency Orders will be communicated through the usual government media platforms.

May God continue to bless Samoa

SOIFUA