New Zealand has confirmed its first case of the coronavirus in someone who returned from Iran, but said the chances of a community outbreak remains low.

The patient - in their 60s - tested positive for COVID-19 on Friday.

They are being treated in Auckland City Hospital and their condition is improving, a Health Ministry statement said.

"Although we have our first case of COVID-19, the chances of community outbreak remain low," the ministry said.

Public health officials have begun tracing the patient's contact history and will test the individual's family members for the virus.

The person travelled on an Emirates Airline flight that originated in Tehran, stopped in Bali, Indonesia, and ended in Auckland on February 26.

People on the final leg of the flight, who are concerned, should contact authorities, the ministry said.

New Zealand said earlier in the day it was imposing temporary restrictions on visitors from Iran, where the death toll from coronavirus had risen to 26, by far the highest number outside China.

The world prepared for a coronavirus pandemic on Friday as hopes the disease could be contained to China vanished and investors dumped equities in expectation of a global recession.

Australia said on Friday another passenger from a cruise ship in Japan had tested positive for the virus.

The patient, the wife of a man who had earlier contracted the virus, is the ninth Australian passenger from the Diamond Princess to come down with the illness.

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