



Cabinet

Minute of Decision

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COVID-19 Review of Temporary Border Measures: 2 March 2020

Portfolio

Health

On 2 March 2020, Cabinet:

- 1 **noted** that the global situation regarding COVID-19 continues to develop rapidly with a high degree of uncertainty, and that it is important for the government to protect the health of New Zealanders and, as part of the global effort to contain the virus, consider the impact on the public health of other Pacific Island countries;
- 2 **noted** that:
 - 2.1 the overall public health risk from this event remains high, and effective border management currently remains the best way to protect New Zealanders from the health effects of a potential outbreak;
 - 2.2 officials continue to recommend taking a precautionary approach, as epidemiology of the outbreak and scientific knowledge continue to evolve;
- 3 **noted** that the current temporary border restrictions are part of New Zealand's wider response to the global outbreak, and are due to expire at 23:59 on Tuesday, 3 March 2020;
- 4 **noted** that the threat to the health of New Zealanders, and any onward threat in relation to other Pacific Island countries, should be considered in the context of whether isolation measures can be reasonably met;
- 5 **noted** that New Zealand should continue to consider adopting border measures consistent with comparable countries, in particular Australia;
- 6 **noted** that on 27 February 2020, the Australian Government extended their temporary border measures for a further week to 7 March 2020;
- 7 **agreed** to retain the current temporary border measures for an additional seven-day period, expiring at 23:59 on Tuesday, 10 March 2020, limited to cover people who have been present in or transited through designated places in the 14 days prior to boarding;
- 8 **noted** that designated places currently include mainland China, Iran and the Diamond Princess cruise ship;

- 9 **agreed** that Category One be divided into Categories 1A and 1B such that:
- 9.1 Category 1A places have temporary travel restrictions in place (i.e. China and Iran currently), and it is expected that all people travelling to New Zealand to undertake 14 days of self isolation and register with Healthline;
- 9.2 Category 1B places do not have travel restrictions but it is expected that all people travelling to New Zealand undertake 14 days of self isolation and register with Healthline;
- 10 **agreed** that Northern Italy and the Republic of Korea be added to the new Category 1B;
- 11 **agreed** that the temporary border measures continue be reviewed on a regular basis, and that officials will provide immediate advice should any information emerge that has a substantial impact on these measures;
- 12 **invited** the Minister of Immigration to give effect to the decision in paragraph 7 above through issuing Immigration Instructions;
- 13 **noted** that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade will inform China, Iran, Italy, South Korea and key Pacific partners of the decisions in paragraphs 7 and 10 above ahead of public communication;
- 14 **noted** that the Ministry of Health will inform Australia and the World Health Organization of the decisions in paragraphs 7 and 10 above ahead of public communication;
- 15 **noted** that, depending on how the global situation evolves over the coming week, and as further evidence about COVID-19 emerges, officials may provide further advice on adding new designated places of concern to the current border measures if required;
- 16 **noted** that officials will prepare further advice on the border measures for consideration by Cabinet on Monday, 9 March 2020 on whether to extend, lift, or change the border measures;
- 17 **noted** that Ministers have asked for further information on making COVID-19 a quarantinable disease under the Health Act 1956, which will expand the range of powers available in respect to COVID-19 (which is currently a notifiable disease), and that Ministers will be provided with information to support a decision on Wednesday, 4 March 2020;
- 18 **noted** that while the New Zealand public health system readiness for COVID-19 is increasing, New Zealand is a gateway to many Pacific Island countries and territories, so that decisions on when to relax or remove New Zealand border measures should take into account Pacific Island readiness;
- 19 **noted** that capability across the Pacific region to prepare for and respond to COVID-19 is variable, and that officials have work underway to support Pacific Island preparedness and response.

Michael Webster
Secretary of the Cabinet

Secretary's note: *This minute has been revised to clarify the wording in paragraphs 9.1 and 9.2 and the application of paragraph 12.*

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