



Cabinet

Minute of Decision

This document contains information for the New Zealand Cabinet. It must be treated in confidence and handled in accordance with any security classification, or other endorsement. The information can only be released, including under the Official Information Act 1982, by persons with the appropriate authority.

COVID-19: Review of Temporary Border Measures

Portfolio Health

On 24 February 2020, Cabinet:

- 1 **noted** that the global situation regarding COVID-19 is developing rapidly with a high degree of uncertainty, and it is important that we 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 Monday, 24 February 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 the Australian Government has extended its border measures for an additional 7 days, to 29 February 2020;
- 7 **agreed** to retain the current temporary border measures for an additional 8-day period, expiring at 23:59 on Tuesday, 3 March 2020, limited to cover people who have been in or transited mainland China in the 14 days prior to boarding;
- 8 **agreed** that the temporary border measures continue be reviewed every 48 hours, and that officials will provide immediate advice should any information emerge that has a substantial impact on these measures;

- 9 **invited** the Minister of Immigration to give effect to the decision in paragraph 7 above through issuing Immigration Instructions;
- 10 **noted** that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade will inform China, Australia, and key Pacific partners of the decision in paragraph 7 above ahead of public communication;
- 11 **noted** that the Ministry of Health will inform Australia and the World Health Organization of the decision in paragraph 7 above ahead of public communication;
- 12 **noted** that officials will prepare further advice for consideration by Cabinet on Monday, 2 March 2020 on whether to extend, lift, or change the border measures;
- 13 **directed** officials to report back to the group of Ministers with Power to Act on New Zealand's response to the COVID-19 outbreak [CAB-20-MIN-0015], including the Acting Minister of Education (Hon Tracey Martin), by Wednesday, 26 February 2020, with more detailed options on any exemption from the current travel restrictions for international tertiary students from China before a go/no-go decision is made;
- 14 **noted** that the Minister of Immigration, subject to further advice from Immigration New Zealand, intends to issue a Special Direction to Immigration Instructions to provide for the extension of the student visas of Chinese nationals who have yet to arrive in New Zealand whose visas are due to expire by 31 March 2020.

Michael Webster
Secretary of the Cabinet

Hard-copy distribution:

Prime Minister
Deputy Prime Minister
Minister of Education
Minister of Health
Minister of Immigration
Acting Minister of Education (Hon Tracey Martin)