

Office of the Minister of Health

Cabinet

COVID-19 Rollover of Border Measures

Proposal

- 1 This paper seeks agreement to maintain the current border measures with the next review at the same time as re-consideration of COVID-19 alert levels.

Relation to government priorities

- 2 Border measures are a key pillar in the Government's response to reduce the risk of more cases of COVID-19 being imported to New Zealand.

Background

- 3 On 19 March 2020, Cabinet agreed to strengthen border measures by moving all of the world into Category 1A to reduce the risk of importing cases of COVID-19 [CAB-20-MIN-0122 refers]. These measures will expire at 2359 hours on 31 March 2020.

Public Health Considerations and Recommendation

- 4 New Zealand continues to face a significant risk of COVID-19 being imported from offshore. Since the border measures were last reviewed, global transmission has rapidly increased. On 26 March there were over 414,000 cases across 197 countries and territories.
- 5 New Zealand now faces increasing domestic community transmission. Imported cases of COVID-19 will place additional pressure on the health sector's response to domestic cases of COVID-19.
- 6 The travel restrictions also reinforce the broader measures being undertaken by the Government at Alert Level 4 [CAB-MIN-0133 refers]. Maintaining the border restrictions would be consistent with Alert Level 4.
- 7 It is therefore recommended that the current border measures continue to be rolled over. The current measures should remain in place while New Zealand is Alert Level 4 (i.e. at least another 4 weeks). They could be reviewed again when Ministers reconsider the COVID-19 system alert levels

International Considerations

- 8 In light of the wide range of border measures that have been put in place across the global community, we assess that any risks to international relationships will be minimal.

Pacific Considerations

- 9 While some areas in the Pacific have relatively strong border measures, there are now confirmed cases of COVID-19 in multiple countries in the Pacific.

This makes the risk associated with temporary visa holders from these countries and territories similar to other parts of the world. I therefore recommend maintaining the current categorisation of specific Pacific Islands¹ as Category 1A, along with the rest of the world.

- 10 The impact of these measures on our Pacific neighbours is mitigated by the exceptions for humanitarian reasons and essential travel for Tongan and Samoan citizens. Realm countries (Tokelau, Niue and the Cook Islands) will also be exempted as they hold New Zealand citizenship.

Economic Considerations

- 11 The economic impact of continuing border restrictions is likely to be marginal, given that New Zealand is at Alert Level 4. Advice on the economic considerations associated with any changes to border restrictions will be provided alongside advice on changes to the Alert Level.

Financial Implications

- 12 This paper does not have financial implications.

Legislative Implications

- 13 This paper does not have any direct legislative implications.

Impact Analysis

- 14 A Regulatory Impact Analysis is not required for this paper.

Population Implications

- 15 There are no specific implications for population groups (including children, seniors, disabled people, women, people who are gender diverse, Pacific peoples, veterans, rural communities, and ethnic communities).

Human Rights

- 16 This paper is consistent with the New Zealand Bill of Rights Act 1990 and the Human Rights Act 1993.

Consultation

- 17 This paper has been prepared by the Ministry of Health. The Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Ministry of Education, Treasury, Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, Ministry for Primary Industries, New Zealand Police, Ministry of Transport, and New Zealand Customs Service were consulted on this paper. Relevant Government Chief Science Advisors were also consulted.

Communications

¹ This means all Pacific Islands Forum members (except Australia and French Polynesia), associate member Tokelau, and observer Wallis and Futuna.

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- 18 A media release will be issued announcing Cabinet decisions on this paper. MFAT will inform key Pacific partners of decisions prior to the announcement. The Ministry of Health will inform Australia and the WHO of decisions prior to the announcement.

Proactive Release

- 19 It is intended that this Cabinet paper be proactively released once the matters are no longer under active consideration, subject to any appropriate withholding of information that would be justified if the information had been requested under the Official Information Act 1982.

Recommendations

The Minister of Health recommends that the Committee:

- 1 **Note** the current categorisations for travel restrictions as of 19 March 2020:

<i>Category</i>	<i>Coming from or have been through in 14 days prior to travel to New Zealand</i>
Category 1A: Cannot travel to New Zealand	All countries
Category 1B: Can travel to New Zealand but must self-isolate for 14 days	People to whom Category 1A does not apply, except air and marine crew.
Category 2: Can travel to New Zealand and must self-isolate for 14 days if unwell	None.

- 2 **Note** that the current travel restrictions expire at 2359 hours on Tuesday, 31 March 2020
- 3 **Agree** to maintain the current border measures with the next review at the same time as re-consideration of COVID-19 alert levels
- 4 **Note** that Category 1A restrictions will continue not to apply to:
- 4.1 New Zealand citizens and residence class visa holders² (including the Realm),
 - 4.2 The partner, legal guardian or any dependent children travelling with a New Zealand citizen or residence class visa holder,
 - 4.3 Australian citizens and permanent residence class visa holders ordinarily resident in New Zealand, and

² This exemption from these restrictions will not apply to a person whose residence class visa was granted off shore and the person is arriving in New Zealand for the first time.

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- 4.4 People subject to regulation 25 of the Immigration (Visa, Entry Permission, and Related Matters) Regulations 2010, which includes air and marine crew
- 5 **Agree** that Category 1A restrictions will continue to not apply to diplomats accredited to New Zealand and currently resident in New Zealand
- 6 **Agree** that exceptions can continue to be sought in relation to Category 1A on a case-by-case basis, for:
- 6.1 Humanitarian reasons;
- 6.2 Essential health worker;
- 6.3 Citizens of Samoa and Tonga for essential travel to New Zealand; and
- 6.4 Partners or dependents of a temporary work or student visa holder, and who normally live in New Zealand
- 6.5 Any other essential workers identified by the group of Ministers with Power to Act.
- 7 **Agree** that the requirement to self-isolate will continue not to apply to air and marine crew to allow flights to continue operating
- 8 **Agree** that those subject to Category 1A border restrictions, but who are eligible to travel to Australia as their final destination, are able to transit via New Zealand as long as that transit remains airside and does not allow entry into New Zealand
- 9 **Invite** the Minister of Immigration to give effect to these decisions through certifying Immigration Instructions.

Authorised for lodgement

Hon Dr David Clark

Minister of Health