

Aide Memoire

Health advice on appropriate border measures for novel coronavirus

Date due to MO: 2 February 2020 **Action required by:** 2 February 2020

Security level: IN CONFIDENCE **Health Report number:** 20200144

To: Rt Hon Jacinda Ardern, Prime Minister

Copy to: Ministers with powers to act on this issue

Contact for telephone discussion

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Action for Private Secretaries

Nil.

Date dispatched to MO:

Health advice on appropriate border measures for novel coronavirus

Purpose of aide memoire

1. This aide memoire provides update public health advice on enhanced border measures in response to evolving evidence on the novel coronavirus.

Background

2. As of 14:00 01 February 2020, there have been approximately 11,953 confirmed cases of the novel coronavirus reported globally and 259 confirmed deaths.
3. Last night (1 February 2020) the Australian Government announced that all foreign travellers who had left or passed through mainland China in the last 14 days would be denied entry into Australia, including transit passengers. Australia has also raised its official travel advice for China to "do not travel". These announcements were made following advice from the Australian Chief Medical Officer.

Health advice in response to evolving epidemiology

4. The Ministry of Health has been closely monitoring the evolving epidemiology of the Novel Coronavirus in particular:
 - the rapid increase in the number of cases in mainland China over recent days and that every province in mainland China has now reported confirmed cases with evidence of person to person transmission
 - an increasing number of other countries are reporting cases, noting that this is still a relatively small number (132 cases as at 01 February 2020) and around 99 percent of cases are in China
 - the likelihood that the number of cases is under-reported as some people will be either asymptomatic or have a mild infection
 - the emerging and plausible evidence that infected but asymptomatic people can transmit the virus to others
 - while the mortality rate remains around 2-3 percent, around 20 percent of confirmed cases have severe illness.
 - recent projections that other major cities in China are probably already sustaining localised outbreaks with the potential for growth exponentially as was seen in Wuhan but with a delay (or lag) behind the Wuhan outbreak of about 1-2 weeks.
5. Currently the evidence is that this infection is only severe and life threatening for a minority of those infected. However, we know that viruses mutate over time, which can change their ability to transmit and the severity of the illness that they cause.
6. While vaccine development is underway, it will take some months at a minimum before a vaccine would be widely available.
7. In summary, this is a rapidly changing situation with high degree of uncertainty and a precautionary approach continues to be warranted.
8. The Ministry of Health also continues to work closely with the Australian Department of Health and participated in the Australian Health Protection Principal Committee meeting on 1 February 2020 that led to updated advice to the Australian Government on strengthened border measures. The Ministry of Health's Technical Advisory Group

(TAG) has previously recommended that New Zealand remain aligned with Australia's response from a public health perspective. Further advice has been sought from TAG which confirms alignment with Australia.

9. Therefore, the Ministry of Health's updated advice as at 2 February 2020 is:
 - to extend the travel history in the case definition for novel coronavirus infection to include travel to mainland China (previously this was Hubei province in China, particularly Wuhan)
 - recommend to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade to now increase the travel advisory to level 4 – do not travel to any part of mainland China
 - in order to substantially reduce the volume of travellers coming from mainland China, that additional border measures be implemented to deny entry to New Zealand to people who have left or transited through mainland China from 2 February 2020, with the exception of:
 - New Zealand citizens (including those from the three Countries of the Realm), permanent residents and their immediate family
 - air crews who have been using appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE).

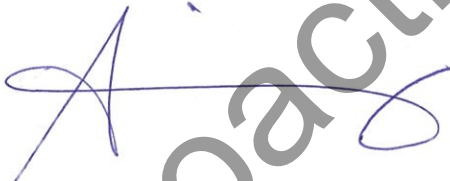
This also applies to passengers transiting in New Zealand, unless they are New Zealand citizens, permanent residents or their immediate families.
 - as of today (02 February), all travellers arriving out of mainland China (not just Hubei Province) be asked to self-isolate for a period of 14 days from the time they leave mainland China.
10. Further consideration needs to be given to people travelling to Pacific countries who are transiting via Auckland.
11. We advise to put these measures in place for an initial 14 day period and kept under constant review.
12. The Prime Minister's Chief Science Advisor, Professor Juliet Gerrard and the Ministry of Health's Chief Science Advisor, Professor Ian Town have both provided input into this advice.
13. As of today, the following countries are known to have closed their border to foreign visitors who have been in China: USA, Australia, Singapore, North Korea, Mongolia, and Nepal. A number of other countries have partial restrictions in place and/or are considering border closures (see attached annex).

Proposed Health Border Measures

14. Advice from Customs is that approximately 3,500 passengers who have listed China as their country of origin pass through New Zealand airports each day. Five to nine flights come to New Zealand directly from mainland China each day (although this is fluctuating due to the current situation) as well as two flights from Hong Kong and one from Taipei. In addition, some passengers will have come to New Zealand from other countries. This number of arrivals will significantly decrease if only New Zealand citizens, permanent residents and their immediate families who have been in mainland China in the past fourteen days are permitted to enter New Zealand.
15. Advice from the Ministry for Primary Industries (MPI) is that all people who have left or transited through mainland China and enter New Zealand will need to go through

biosecurity. MPI will be minimising physical contact with these passengers. Biosecurity staff can largely search their luggage manually or by X-ray without the passengers being present. Where human contact is required and should the Ministry of Health general risk assessment and advice warrant it, we may alter our methods for engaging with passengers. MPI is also giving consideration to the sea border and clearing commercial shipping vessels with crews from mainland China. MPI envisages a similar approach, that is minimising personal contact.

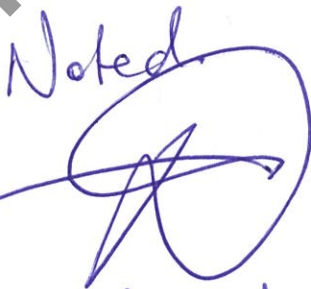
16. Based on our understanding of current Australian border health measures, it is proposed that our measures will be the same:
- flights will continue to be met from mainland China
 - in addition to the current measures, health staff will require passengers to self-isolate for fourteen days. Passengers will be given information about what self-isolation means ie no return to work or school, no attending social functions or mass gatherings, but freely able to continue daily activities within their home environment.
 - passengers will be given a thermometer and asked to monitor their temperature daily. They will be advised to phone the public health unit if their temperature becomes elevated (38C or higher).
 - passengers who may be taking internal flights will be provided with a mask and advice on how to wear and dispose of it.
 - any passenger with an elevated temperature will be managed according to the ill traveller protocol.
17. For passengers who are not able to self-isolate at home, isolation facilities may be required. Public health units have advanced planning on the provision of isolation facilities and we will check whether there are facilities immediately available for individuals and families, if required.



Dr Ashley Bloomfield

Director-General of Health

Noted



David Clark 02/02/2020

Border Restrictions Imposed by Countries
Last updated: 11:38AM 2 February 2020

Countries	Others	Border status	Comments	Source
Australia		Border closed to foreign visitors from China	6(a)	Australian Department of Health
Singapore		Border closed to travellers from China		Open source information (2 Feb 2020)
Russia		Border closed		Formal Message (1 Feb) and Open source information (2 Feb 2020)
	Hong Kong	Partial closure of border		Open source information (2 Feb 2020)
Japan		Border closed to travellers from Hubei province in past 14 days.		Formal Message (2 Feb 2020)
USA		Border closed to foreign travellers from China. closed to all foreigners		Open source information (2 Feb 2020)
North Korea/DPRK		Border with China closed.		Open source information (2 Feb 2020)
Mongolia		Border restrictions.		Open source information (2 Feb 2020)
Pakistan				Open source information (2 Feb 2020)
Italy				Open source information (2 Feb 2020)
Viet Nam				Open source information (2 Feb 2020)
Canada	Taiwan	?		Formal Message (2 Feb 2020)
Israel				
Afghanistan		Border closed to travellers		Open source information (2 Feb 2020)
Kazakhstan				Open source information (2 Feb 2020)
Uzbekistan				Open source information (2 Feb 2020)
Laos		Border open - increased screening and quarantine measures		Open source information (2 Feb 2020)
Nepal		Border closed for 15 days from 30 Jan		Open source information (2 Feb 2020)
South Korea/Republic of Korea (ROK)		A ban on entry is under consideration - 2 Feb		Formal Message (2 Feb 2020)
American Samoa				Formal Message (2 Feb 2020)
Solomon Islands				Formal Message (2 Feb 2020)
Samoa		SGOV is also contemplating imposing an inbound "no mission" period.		Formal Message (2 Feb 2020)

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