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COVID-19 timeline  
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# Major steps taken to protect New Zealanders from COVID-19



RT HON JACINDA ARDERN(/MINISTER/RT-HON-JACINDA-ARDERN)

Prime Minister (/portfolio/labour-led-government-2017-2020/prime-minister)

- Every person entering New Zealand from anywhere in the world will be required to self-isolate for 14 days, excluding the Pacific<sup>[1]</sup>.
- These restrictions will all be reviewed in 16 days' time.
- Existing travel ban retained for China and Iran
- Cruise ships banned from coming to New Zealand, until at least 30 June 2020
- Strict new health measures at the border for people departing to the Pacific
- A range of measures to assist those in self-isolation to be announced next week
- Government will work closely with the aviation sector to encourage airlines to remain active in New Zealand, limit impacts on the tourism sector and exporters
- Directive on mass gatherings to be announced early next week

### Prime Minister's statement

Good afternoon

The full Cabinet met this afternoon to make a range of significant decisions to further protect the health of New Zealanders and reduce the threat of transmission of COVID-19 in New Zealand.

First I want to provide some context to our decisions.

New Zealand has to date, relative to other countries, a small number of cases. We have successfully managed to contact trace for every one of those cases, and are in the process of doing so for our latest cases. This has been a critical part of our response.

Secondly, our smaller number of cases has helped us to manage them in the right place, and with the right support. The majority of our cases have not required our hospital system to care for them.

The key continues to be leaving our hospital system for those who need it most.

All of this points to one strategy which has guided our decision making - spread the cases, and flatten the curve.

It is not realistic for New Zealand to have only a handful of cases.

The international evidence proves that is not realistic, and so we must plan and prepare for more cases.

But, the scale of how many cases we get and how fast we get them is something we should do as much as we can to slow. That is how we ensure health services are there for those who need them most.

That's why we must go hard, and go early, and do everything we can to protect New Zealanders health.

That is exactly why, to tackle this global pandemic, Cabinet made far reaching and unprecedented decisions today.

As of midnight Sunday every person entering New Zealand, including returning New Zealand citizens and residents, will be required to enter self-isolation for 14 days. Everybody.

The Pacific are exempted from this measure, though anyone from these countries will be required to automatically self-isolate should they exhibit any COVID-19 symptoms upon arrival in New Zealand.

These restrictions will all be reviewed in 16 days' time.

Alongside Israel, and a small number of Pacific Islands who have effectively closed their border, this decision will mean New Zealand will have the widest ranging and toughest border restrictions of any country in the world.

We are also encouraging New Zealanders to avoid all non-essential travel overseas. This help reduces the risk of a New Zealand bringing COVID-19 back with them.

We accept that for New Zealanders currently overseas this is a stressful time and we encourage any New Zealander needing consular assistance to contact the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

In addition to restrictions on air travel we are also taking firm measures on cruise ships. As of midnight tonight we are issuing a directive to all cruise ships not to come to New Zealand until at least 30 June 2020, at which time the directive will be reviewed.

I want to be very clear - these measures are about people, not products. They do not apply to cargo ships or cargo planes or to marine or air crew, and we will be working to ensure we keep sea and air freight routes open for imports and exports.



In short, no one needs to conduct a run on their supermarket. It's worth remembering that we've had travel restrictions on China for over a month, and those supply routes continue.

We are mindful that some items that come into New Zealand travel via passenger flights. That's why support, where needed, will be provided to ensure that essential air freight like pharmaceuticals continue to be shipped into New Zealand.

We did not take these decisions lightly. We know these travel restrictions will place significant strain on the aviation industry, and we anticipate some routes will reduce or cease for a period of time.

As such the Government will work closely with the aviation sector to encourage and support airlines to remain active in New Zealand so that we can re-bound from the restrictions quickly and not have significant impacts on our tourism sector, exporters, and economy.

In addition to these measures the Finance Minister will also announce an economic response including the business continuity package on Tuesday.

We are also stepping up our actions at the border as a key departure route to the Pacific. New Zealand has a huge sense of responsibility to support our Pacific neighbours.

As such strict new border exit measures for people travelling to the Pacific will be put in place and include:

- No travel for people who have travelled outside of New Zealand in the past 14 days,
- No travel for close or casual contacts of a confirmed case.
- No travel for anyone who is symptomatic
- Health assessment including temperature check

Taken as a whole, the border measures we are taking today will mean significantly more people will enter self-isolation, and supporting and facilitating that to occur is critical.

We are already registering all travellers into New Zealand, and Healthline is monitoring the self-isolation process.

Today we instructed officials to step up enforcement of self isolation through measures such as spot checks. It is worth mentioning though, to date more than 10,500 people are or have successfully self-isolated in New Zealand. People know that it's in the best interest of their community and they're pulling together to look after one another.

After all, the combination of restricting the virus coming here and isolating it when it does are two of the most important steps we can take to avoid community outbreak.

Given self-isolation is so important, we want to make it as easy as possible.

As such the Government will be introducing a range of measures to assist with self-isolation.

Expect more on this early next week.

We will also increase community support to those unable to support themselves in isolation.

In addition to these measures the Finance Minister will also announce a business continuity package next week, the Health Minister will announce a suite of additional health measures to scale up the responsiveness of our health system to the virus and a public information campaign will be launched.

Ultimately though, the best protection for the economy is containing the virus. A widespread outbreak will hurt our economy far more in the long run than short term measures to prevent a mass outbreak occurring.

These measures, while disruptive, are needed to make the space we need as a nation to prepare and manage the spread of COVID-19.

We all have obligations to limit the spread of the virus and basic health measures is are the heart of that.

However in order to limit the risk of community outbreak when people are in close proximity to each other we will also be announcing further guidelines on mass gatherings. For now, Pasifika and the 15 March Memorial have been cancelled.

The guidance we will be developing more broadly on mass gatherings will be based on the following criteria:

- Large numbers of people in close proximity
- Events where people are more likely to be in physical contact
- Events where participants have travelled from overseas
- And non-ticketed events, where for instance there is no seat allocation making it difficult to contact trace

Again, advice and criteria on mass gatherings will be released next week. For those who need more immediate advice, they should contact their public health unit.

In conclusion, we have two choices as a nation. One is to let COVID-19 roll on, and brace.

The second is to go hard on measures to keep it out, and stamp it out - not because we can stop a global pandemic from reaching us, but because it is in our power to slow it down.

I make no apology for choosing the second path. New Zealanders public health comes first. If we have that, we can recover from the impacts on the economy, the impacts on tourism, and the impacts on our airline.

Finally, this is an unprecedented time. While we don't have community transmission here, now is the time to prepare. And we can all play a role in that. So here's my request to New Zealanders:

1. Wash your hands
2. If you don't need to travel overseas, then don't. Enjoy your own back yard for a time.
3. Wash your hands
4. If you're sick, stay home.
5. If you sneeze, do it into your elbow
6. Wash your hands.
7. Stop handshakes, hugs, and hongi - I know this is counter to who we are as a nation, but the best thing we can do right now to show love and affection to one another, is to switch to the east coast wave.
8. Please be mindful of the older citizens in your life. Check in on them, but if you're sick, keep your distance

Finally, we are a tough resilient people. We have been here before. But our journey will depend on how we work together. We are taking every measure we need as a government, and we ask that you do to.

We all have a role to play. Look out for your neighbour, look out for your family. Look out for your friends.

[i] The Pacific is defined as the Cook Islands, the Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, Kiribati, Nauru, New Caledonia, Niue, Palau, Papua New Guinea, the Republic of Marshall Islands, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tokelau, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu & Wallis and Futuna.



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