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Stronger border measures to protect NZers from COVID-19

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

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

The Government has taken further measures to protect New Zealanders from the COVID-19 virus, effectively stopping all people from boarding a plane to New Zealand from 11:59pm today, except for returning New Zealanders, Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern announced today.

New Zealanders' partners, legal guardians or any dependent children travelling with them may also return.

"Protecting New Zealanders from COVID-19 is our number one priority. In recent days it has become increasingly clear that the spread of the virus in other parts of the world means we need to take even stronger border measures," Jacinda Ardern said.

"Today's decision stops any tourist, or temporary visa holder such as students or temporary workers, from coming to and entering into New Zealand.

"The rapidly worsening global health situation means that the threat to people's health in New Zealand has risen, even in the five days since we took the world-leading step of requiring 14 days of self-isolation for anyone entering the country.

"All of the cases of COVID-19 identified in New Zealand relate to people travelling to New Zealand and bringing the virus with them – therefore we need to further restrict the risk of people bringing the virus into New Zealand.

"All of the evidence to date is that returning New Zealanders understand the requirement for self-isolation but I have become increasingly concerned that visitors to the country either may not be able to adequately self-isolate for 14 days or chose not to and that is an unacceptable risk that we must eliminate.

"These changes also apply to the Pacific, which has previously been exempted.

"It remains the case that the protection of the Pacific from COVID-19 is a major concern for the New Zealand Government and these measures support that.

"A small number of exemptions to the new measures can be sought for humanitarian reasons, essential health workers and citizens of Samoa and Tonga who need to travel to New Zealand for essential reasons.

"The Government understands that this decision will have a significant impact on the economy, which is why we have put in place a world-leading support package for business and will continue to work with and support all affected industries.

"However, such temporary measures are essential if we are to avoid the worst of what we are now seeing overseas," Jacinda Ardern said.