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NEW ZEALAND

# Covid 19 coronavirus: Uncertainty faces New Zealanders stranded in Sydney

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NSW Premier Gladys Berejiklian has announced tough new restrictions for the state after a surge in Covid-19 cases. Video / Sky News Australia



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New Zealanders stranded in Sydney after New Zealand quickly closed its borders to New South Wales as it deals with a growing number of Covid-19 cases are now bracing themselves for extended stays across the ditch.

Last night, Covid Response Minister Chris Hipkins called a halt to the quarantine-free travel bubble arrangement with New South Wales as the number of community cases in Sydney continues to grow.

The pause took effect from 11.59pm last night and is scheduled to last 72 hours. The decision would be reviewed on Thursday.

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Some travellers only found out that their flights home had been cancelled hours before they were due to depart after receiving a call from their travel agent just before 9pm last night.

Travel broker Melissa Irvine said she had several customers in Sydney who were about to fly home so as soon as she saw the announcement last night she called them to let them know.

One woman who had been due to fly home this morning hadn't been aware of the change and asked Irvine to extend her hotel accommodation and rebook her on a flight on Saturday before they were snapped up.

Irvine also had other customers who had rebooked their flights for next Tuesday.

Both her customers were also bracing themselves for their stays to be extended as it looked more and more likely that the quarantine-free travel arrangement would continue past Thursday night.

Geoff Best, 46, has been living in Sydney since October last year. He gave notice on his apartment last week and had been making plans to move back to the Bay of Plenty within the next two weeks.

The project manager said the pause in quarantine-free travel had put his plans in disarray and if needed he was preparing to spend two weeks in MIQ in New Zealand.

"It's certainly impacting my plans at the moment, as in when am I actually going to be able to fly back?"

He said the restrictions in New South Wales weren't too great and there was just a bigger requirement on mask wearing.

"Life is pretty much that same at the moment."

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Hipkins said the decision was made due to several unknowns, including a case that was infectious while in the Sydney community and a primary-school-age child with no clear link established at present.

It comes at the same time as quarantine-free travel between New Zealand and Victoria resumes.