CVD Paper

(DPMC, 2020i)
[31 Mar 2020]

COVID-19: REQUEST FOR EXEMPTION TO TEMPORARY BORDER RESTRICTIONS FOR ESSENTIAL WORKERS

To	COVID-19 Group of Ministers		
From	All of Government Group	**Date**	31/03/2020

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Purpose

1 This paper seeks agreement to an exemption to COVID 19 temporary border measures to enable essential workers in the was ewater sector to enter New Zealand.

Cabinet has agreed high-level parameters for exemptions to the COVID-19 border restrictions

2 On 19 March 2020, Cabinet agreed to border restrictions preventing entry to New Zealand [CAB-20-MIN-0122 refers]. The following groups are not subject to the restrictions:

a. New Zealand citizens and residence class visa holders;

b. The partner, legal guardian or any dependent children travelling with a New Zealand citizen or residence class visa holder;

c. Australian citizens and permanent residence class visa holders ordinarily resident in New Zealand; and

d. People subject to regulation 25 or the Immigration (Visa, Entry Permission, and Related Matters) Regulations 2010, which includes air and marine crew.

3 Cabinet also agreed high-level parameters for case-by-case exemptions to COVID-19 border restrictions, which include [CAB-20-MIN-0122 refers]:

a. Those who need to travel for humanitarian reasons;

b. Essential health workers;

c. Citizens of Samoa and Tonga for essential travel to New Zealand;

d. Partners or dependents of a temporary work or student visa holder, and who normally live in New Zealand; and

e. Any other essential workers identified by the group of COVID-19 Ministers with Power to Act.

A request has have been made for an exemption to the travel restrictions for workers in essential services

4 Officials have received a request to enable seven essential workers in the wastewater sector to enter New Zealand to work on the Mt Albert Sludge project under the exemption in paragraph 2e above. These workers will be required to hold valid visas.

5 The Infrastructure Pillar of the COVID-19 government response recommends Ministers support these applications, as they are deemed critical to the maintenance of New Zealand's wastewater services.

Workers required to ensure the continuation of the Mt Albert Sludge project

6 The exemption is sought for seven experts to support the installation of a solution to the Mt Albert Sludge Pipeline failure. They are identified in Annex One.

7 Two sludge conveyance pipes taking sludge from the Moa Point Wastewater Treatment Plant to the Southern Landfill burst inside a tunnel under Mt Albert in January 2020. Since then, 1.1million litres of sludge per day has been trucked along the southern coast of Wellington. The sludge is an untreated by-product of the wastewater treatment process and contains a high concentration of pathogenic organisms (virus, bacteria, protozoa).

8 The solution is to install a German manufactured liner, commissioned to span the entire 1.8km of pipe. It is the first use of this methodology in Australasia. The experts will support the installation, applying their experience with this liner system. This role cannot be undertaken by workers currently in New Zealand as experience with the particular liner system is necessary.

9 The work cannot be deferred because the trucking operation poses a high risk to both human health and the environment. It has the potential to be impacted by staff illness and equipment failure – which may result in suspension of trucking, and instead discharging the sludge into the environment.

10 The seven expert workers are required to ensure the installation is successful, as well as to ensure continuity in case any become sick.

11 The workers are currently based in Privacy of natural persons . They are nationals of Privacy of natural persons . It is intended that the workers will travel via a commercial service, from Frankfurt via Qatar and Sydney. These workers will self-isolate on arrival in New Zealand at Wellington, as the port of entry. Wellington Water has arranged hotel accommodation for the self-isolation period.

12 The first liner is expected to arrive on site for installation as early as mid-April. Wellington Water need the workers to arrive in mid-April, to complete their self-isolation then begin working on the installation. They are scheduled to arrive on 15 April.

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The workers will be invited to apply for temporary visas as supported essential workers

13 In accordance with Immigration Instructions, *H5: COVID-19 Support Restricted Temporary Entry Instructions,* the workers will be invited to apply for supported temporary visas as essential workers "critical to the maintenance of critical infrastructure."

Recommendations

The All of Government Group recommends that the COVID-19 Group of Ministers:

1 **Note** that on 19 March 2020, Cabinet agreed further border restrictions [CAB 20-MIN-0122 refers] to prevent travel to New Zealand for anyone other than:

1.1 New Zealand citizens and residence class visa holders;

1.2 The partner, legal guardian or any dependent children travelling with a New Zealand citizen or residence class visa holder;

1.3 Australian citizens and permanent residence class visa holders ordinarily resident in New Zealand; and

1.4 People subject to regulation 25 or the Immigration (Visa, Entry Permission, and Related Matters) Regulations 2010, which includes air and marine crew

2 **Note** that Cabinet also agreed high level parameters for case-by-case exemptions to COVID-19 border restrictions, which include [CAB-20-MIN-0122 refers]:

2.1 Those who need to travel for humanitarian reasons;

2.2 Essential heal h workers;

2.3 Citizens o Samoa and Tonga for essential travel to New Zealand;

2.4 Partners or dependents of a temporary work or student visa holder, and who normally live in New Zealand; and

2.5 Any other essential workers identified by the group of Ministers with Power to Act

3 **Note** that these requests are supported by the Infrastructure Pillar of the COVID-19 government response, as the Mt Albert Sludge project is critical to repair Wellington's wastewater system;

4 **Note** that visas have not yet been granted for these workers but they will be invited to apply for temporary visas as supported essential workers;

5 **Note** that the workers will self-isolate on arrival in New Zealand before commencing work and Wellington Water has arranged hotel accommodation for the self-isolation period in Wellington at the point of entry;

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6 **Agree** to make an exemption to the COVID-19 border restrictions for the seven workers who have been identified as critical for the Mt Albert Sludge project;

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Annex One: List of essential workers

	DOB	NATIONALITY	PASSPORT NUMBER
Privacy of natural persons			

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