

In Confidence

Office of the Prime Minister
Social Wellbeing Committee

RECONNECTING NEW ZEALANDERS WITH THE WORLD**Proposal**

- 1 This paper outlines our approach to *Reconnecting New Zealanders* with the world. It proposes that, as vaccines roll out, we prepare to move from our current approach of Quarantine Free Travel with specific countries, towards a risk based approach where we are progressively changing our border settings for travellers based on a set of factors, including the country of departure and vaccine status. It outlines the key questions and considerations that will need to be met to inform next steps towards easing border restrictions without compromising public safety, and provides a stocktake of current and upcoming work.

Relation to Government priorities

- 2 This proposal supports the ongoing response to COVID-19 by setting out an approach for safely reconnecting New Zealanders to the world.

Executive Summary

- 3 The success of New Zealand's Elimination Strategy in responding to the pandemic puts us in a stronger position than most other countries. We have choices and options that most do not. In setting policy for our reconnection with the world, we will look to measures that reflect the best of what we see overseas, but that work for New Zealand.
- 4 The pandemic remains the largest threat to the health of New Zealanders and our economy. Many countries are experiencing, or have experienced, a third wave of infection. Some that were initially successful are now responding to large outbreaks. Others are vaccinating to recover freedoms that New Zealand's response to date is providing.
- 5 The rollout of the vaccine globally will create opportunities for people and countries to reconnect, helping to reduce prevalence, protect populations, and lower the risk profile of fully vaccinated individuals who wish to travel. As the vaccine rolls out around the world, we will continue to learn more about the ongoing effect of vaccination on transmission of and immunity to the virus, and evolve our response accordingly, supported by science, research and evidence. Advice suggests it will be a significant period of time before we reach a 'new normal' as this is contingent on high levels of vaccination across the world, including in developing countries.
- 6 The rollout of vaccination in New Zealand is key to our reconnection approach. As our domestic rollout progresses, it will increase our layers of protection and will open