

# CVD Decision Paper

## COVID-19: ALL OF GOVERNMENT PLAN FOR MANAGING THE DEPARTURE OF STRANDED FOREIGN NATIONALS FROM NEW ZEALAND

<b>To</b>	COVID-19 Group of Ministers		
<b>From</b>	All of Government Group	<b>Date</b>	1/04/2020

### Purpose

To provide an overview on rationale and processes for stranded foreign nationals to leave New Zealand on scheduled commercial or foreign-government assisted charter flights under COVID-19 Alert Level 4. This paper has been approved by Police Commissioner Mike Bush, head of the COVID-19 Operations Command Centre, and Chris Seed, Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade.

### Summary

- 1 There are approximately 381,000 temporary visitors in New Zealand, with around a quarter estimated to be stranded foreign nationals who may wish to leave. Governments from some fifty countries have expressed an interest in returning their nationals from New Zealand.
- 2 Facilitating the departure of stranded foreign nationals in New Zealand has several benefits, including limiting the exposure of health resources to these foreign nationals (freeing them up to focus on New Zealanders), reducing the risk of community transmission, and reducing scope for potential future welfare needs of these foreign nationals (a number of whom are increasingly running out of money). There may also be an opportunity for New Zealanders who wish to return to do so, if there is a match between their location and the destination of the charter flight.
- 3 Under Level 4 restrictions, essential travel does not encapsulate foreign nationals seeking to return to their home nations, and foreign nationals may only travel to an international airport in the city they are currently in, and only in a private vehicle. This creates a significant restriction on the ability of foreign nationals to depart New Zealand, particularly as many foreign missions have significant numbers of nationals outside Auckland – the only city receiving international flights at present. Reclassifying limited travel by foreign nationals as 'essential' will enable their return in a safe and effective way. For example, most Canadians are in the South Island, while one third of France's citizens are in the South Island. Reclassifying limited stranded foreign nationals' travel as 'essential' will enable repatriation in a safe and effective way.
- 4 To facilitate the departure of stranded foreign nationals while respecting public health drivers, officials are now seeking Cabinet agreement to:

- i. Consider stranded foreign nationals returning to their home nations to be travelling for 'essential' purposes;
  - ii. Extend land-based transport options to support stranded foreign nationals to get to Auckland and Christchurch Airports to catch flights out of New Zealand;
  - iii. Allow use of a single-leg domestic (scheduled commercial or, if agreed, charter) flight for people to transit to Auckland and Christchurch Airports in order to leave on booked international flights; and
  - iv. Allow foreign government assisted charter flights to recommence under carefully managed conditions
- 5 If agreed, these processes will be coordinated to work seamlessly with the current process for managing the return of New Zealanders from offshore, and in particular, around self-isolation and quarantine requirements. Both (inbound and outbound) processes need to work in a way that respect the public health priority of breaking the chain of community transmission to protect New Zealanders and prevent overwhelming the New Zealand health system.
- 6 Alongside the implementation of the processes outlined above, strategic communications is being developed to make it clear to New Zealanders why a limited exemption to travel restrictions in this instance is in the national interest.

### Consultation

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- 7 This paper has been consulted with the Ministries of Transport, Health, Education, Foreign Affairs and Trade, and Business, Innovation and Employment, as well as Customs, Police, and the New Zealand Defence Force.

### Recommendations

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It is recommended that the COVID-19 Group of Ministers:

1. **Note** there are a significant number of stranded foreign nationals in New Zealand, placing additional strain on our infrastructure and critical support services.
2. **Note** that the current land-based and domestic flight restrictions provide a significant limitation on the ability of stranded foreign nationals to catch international flights out of New Zealand.

#### *Ground transportation to Auckland and Christchurch Airports*

3. **Note** that a significant number of stranded foreign nationals are within two hours of ground travel distance of Auckland or Christchurch Airports.
4. **Agree** that land-based travel to these airports, by a stranded foreign national with a ticket on an international flight (whether scheduled commercial or, if approved, charter) that is departing from within the city they are in or near, be considered an essential journey for the purposes of the COVID-19 Alert Level system.

- 5. Agree** that in classifying these as an essential journey, these stranded foreign nationals can travel to an airport via private transport, taxis or rideshare services, public transport, or dedicated charter buses, subject to applicable requirements and health guidelines.

#### *Domestic air travel of stranded foreign nationals to Auckland and Christchurch Airports*

- 6. Note** that if ground transport to Auckland and Christchurch Airports is approved as outlined in this paper, a number of stranded foreign nationals are in the regions and will still not be able to reach Auckland or Christchurch Airports through the approach recommended above.
- 7. Agree** that stranded foreign nationals be permitted to travel to an airport and board a domestic transit flight (scheduled commercial or, if agreed, charter) to Auckland or Christchurch airports in order to connect with international flights, subject to all relevant COVID-19 Alert Level health conditions, and so long as they have a ticket booked for an international flight schedule to depart no more than 24 hours from the departure of their connecting domestic transit flight.

#### *Land-based transport to domestic airports*

- 8. Note** that extending the ability to take land-based transport within five hours of the five domestic transit airports operating (Auckland, Wellington, Christchurch, Dunedin and Nelson) would allow all but a very few stranded foreign nationals to access international flights.
- 9. Agree** that such a transit corridor be permitted for stranded foreign nationals.

#### *Qatar Airways: moving to twice daily flights*

- 10. Note** that Qatar Airways has requested that the New Zealand Government allow it to move from daily to twice daily flights between Doha and Auckland.
- 11. Note** that no other airlines are currently flying between the Middle East/Europe and New Zealand, and that these extra flights would provide a valuable means for European nationals here to be evacuated and for New Zealanders stranded in Europe to return home.
- 12. Note** that these flights, depending on how many New Zealanders took them to come home, could place strain on our system of transitioning New Zealanders back into the country (including via managed self-isolation) during Alert Level 4.
- 13. Agree** to Qatar Airways' request to move to twice daily flights.

#### *Foreign government assisted charter flights*

- 14. Note** that initial feedback from 25 diplomatic missions suggests there are around 35,000 foreign nationals who would leave if they could access enhanced means of doing so on scheduled commercial or foreign government assisted charter flights

**15. Agree** that the current moratorium on foreign government assisted departure flights be lifted, with the tempo and capacity of such flights to be actively managed, commensurate with COVID-19 Alert Level 4 and processes for managing the safe return of New Zealanders into self-isolation and, as necessary, quarantine.

**16. Note** that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade will be responsible for leading negotiations with foreign governments on these government assisted departure flights.

s6(a)

*Announcement and messaging*

**19. Agree** that these the above decisions should be publicly announced on the afternoon of 2 April (drawing on the strategic communications messaging in Annex 3) and implemented immediately thereafter.

**20. Note** that officials will develop a more detailed messaging framework to explain these decisions. This will include making it clear that passengers must comply with all health requirements, including a number of COVID-19 related questions, before undertaking travel.

## REPORT

### Ground transportation and domestic flight transfers

It is estimated there are 381,000 temporary visitors in New Zealand with around a quarter estimated to be stranded foreign nationals who may wish to leave. Some of these are increasingly running out of money, and there have been reports of some flouting the Level 4 safety and health measures. This poses risks to New Zealanders. Facilitating their departure would limit the exposure of health resources to these stranded foreign nationals, reduce the risk of community transmission, and reduce scope for potential future welfare needs.

2 At the same time, limited facilitation of these stranded foreign nationals departing New Zealand will appease many of the approximately 50 missions who have expressed interest in this issue to MFAT. We note that the issue is increasingly gaining international media attention – particularly in Europe.

*How would we do this?*

3 A critical requirement associated with allowing stranded foreign nationals to depart New Zealand is to uphold existing COVID-19 Level 4 safety and health measures. The following processes are suggested to support the end-to-end system to do this. This end-to-end approach is set out in Annex 1 below.

*Land-based transport*

4 Officials recommend that passengers currently close to Auckland and Christchurch be permitted to travel to the respective international airports in Auckland and Christchurch to depart on international flights for which they have tickets (whether scheduled commercial or, if approved, charters), with a broader range of travel options than currently exists. This travel would be considered an essential journey and included in the existing Level 4 definitions of what constitutes an essential journey. (Christchurch international airport is not currently receiving international flights).

5 The end-to-end approach recommended is set out in Annex 1. It would enable stranded foreign nationals with an international air ticket to travel to the airport via private ground transport, taxis or rideshare services, public transport, rental vehicles or dedicated charter buses (e.g. arranged to transport stranded foreign nationals for a foreign government-assisted charter flight). All stranded foreign nationals and providers would be required to comply with the existing health guidelines for their respective modes of travel. Journeys would be able to be made within five hours' travel from the person's location to the airport in a private or rental vehicle, and within 2 hours' travel for any non-private mode.<sup>1</sup>

6 Also consistent with the current requirements, stranded foreign nationals would not be allowed to travel if they are at risk of COVID-19, specifically they would not be able to travel if they:

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<sup>1</sup> The limit of five hours is consistent with the agreed limit for self-travel to self-isolation for international arrivals.

- i. are diagnosed with COVID-19;
- ii. have symptoms consistent with COVID-19;
- iii. have been tested for COVID-19 and are awaiting results;
- iv. are a close contact of a suspected/probable/confirmed case of COVID-19; and
- v. have travelled internationally within the last 14 days.

### *Domestic flight transfers*

7 A number of stranded foreign nationals are in the regions, and will not be able to reach Auckland or Christchurch Airports through the approach recommended above. Under current Level 4 requirements, stranded foreign nationals are not permitted to take domestic flights to connect with international flights to leave New Zealand.

8 We recommend stranded foreign nationals be allowed to take a single-leg domestic transit charter or commercial flight to Auckland or Christchurch Airports. An approach to this is set out in Annex 1, and would occur as follows:

- i. Stranded foreign nationals meet the conditions laid out above for taking land transport to their domestic airport.
- ii. Stranded foreign nationals have a ticketed seat on an international flight (whether scheduled commercial or, if agreed, charter) leaving New Zealand from Auckland or Christchurch Airport scheduled to depart within 24 hours of the departure time of the individual's domestic (scheduled commercial or, if agreed, charter) flight.

9 Once the individual arrives at Auckland or Christchurch Airports, they would be required, as soon as possible, collect their luggage from their domestic flight, proceed to the international terminal, check-in for their international flight, and proceed through necessary checks to go air-side. They must then remain air-side until they board their international flight and leave the country.

10 Health checks would apply at domestic and international airports to ensure that stranded foreign national passengers who became symptomatic would not be able to proceed with the rest of their journey.

11 At present, there are few scheduled commercial domestic flights and a number of regional airports have closed or are set to do so. In Alert Level 4, Auckland, Wellington, Christchurch, Dunedin and Nelson airports open with the ability to travel by land-based transport up to five hours, most of those wishing to travel should be catered for.

### *Special consideration groups*

12 There will be some groups of stranded foreign nationals who may require particular management processes, and that will be included in the special operating procedures for foreign government-assisted charter flights. This may include students under the age of 18, and those with long layover times in Auckland or Christchurch.

## International flights, including foreign-assisted charter flights

13 Stranded foreign nationals seeking to leave New Zealand will depart on either one of a very limited number of scheduled commercial flights, or a foreign government assisted charter flight.

### *Commercial flights*

14 While scheduled commercial flights have not dried up completely, they have reduced significantly to the point where demand outstrips supply. Air New Zealand is only operating two long-haul flights open to passengers at present – a twice-weekly service to Hong Kong, and a thrice-weekly service to Los Angeles. There are a handful of foreign airlines continuing operations, including two once-weekly services to Guangzhou and Shanghai, and flights at slightly higher frequency to Singapore, Kuala Lumpur and Doha.

15 Both Qatar Airways and Malaysia Airlines have sought to increase their capacity to Auckland until mid-April – which can be seen as interest in catering for the current demand by stranded foreign nationals to depart from New Zealand.

16 Some stranded foreign nationals may have tickets for commercial scheduled flights which they are unable to take due to the restrictions on domestic movement in New Zealand. Some missions have indicated their preference for these people to be allowed to fly domestically to take these flights, before they consider any form of charter flights.

17 Qatar Airways, which is currently the only airline flying between New Zealand and the Middle East/Europe, has a daily service between Auckland and Doha. It has proposed to the New Zealand Government to add a second daily Doha–Auckland flight, commencing immediately through to approximately 17 April.

18 Qatar Airways' continued air links with New Zealand and through to Europe provide a critical commercial option for foreign nationals in New Zealand to get home and for New Zealanders in Europe to get back to New Zealand as well as vital support for our supply chain including the import of critical medicines. Officials understand there may be other airlines looking to restart commercial services temporarily to move stranded people out in April, so there may be further requests coming.

19 s9(2)(ba), s9(2)(b)(ii)

Loading numbers are steadily decreasing across all international flights. s9(2)(ba), s9(2)(b)(ii)

20 The challenge around additional flights at this time is that our current border systems can handle a steady state of approximately 400 arrivals a day – primarily based on the ability to manage a rolling volume of 1,300 in managed isolation. On 31 March, the system processed 355 people so is close to capacity. This proposed increase from Qatar would put a strain on this, although it is hard to know what the loadings will be. It could be around or as they continue to decrease across all international flights may be lower, and two trips a day may not equate to a doubling but rather numbers being split across flights. s9(2)(ba), s9(2)(b)(ii)

21 The benefits of the increase in flights are in: bringing in New Zealanders currently stranded overseas, allowing the backlog of foreign nationals to depart reducing pressure of managing these people on the New Zealand system, and the additional critical imports. These need to be balanced against the additional strain placed on the border and health infrastructure via managing additional infected individuals arriving on the additional flights.

22 s9(2)(h), s9(2)(ba)

#### *Foreign-assisted charter flights – overall rationale*

23 Almost 50 diplomatic missions accredited to New Zealand have contacted MFAT expressing interest in facilitating the departure of their nationals from New Zealand either via commercial (scheduled and charter flights) or defence aviation options.

24 Initial feedback from about 25 missions indicates that there are around 35,000 foreign nationals potentially interested in options for evacuation (German and UK nationals being the biggest cohorts) and that the primary reason for seeking to evacuate is the inability to move around the country to catch commercial scheduled flights.

25 As per the geographic spread and volumes of stranded foreign nationals indicated to us by stranded foreign missions (see table one below), scheduled commercial flights are unlikely to be sufficient for moving stranded foreign nationals out of New Zealand in an adequate timeframe. Foreign government-assisted charter flights would therefore be needed to address gaps in the current remaining scheduled commercial air networks.

#### *Foreign-assisted charter flights – repatriating New Zealanders overseas*

26 The question arises of whether outbound charter flights contracted by foreign governments (the German contract with Air NZ being the only one of which we are currently aware) can be used to repatriate New Zealanders from the locations where the flights land. Ministers have earlier agreed criteria which should inform decisions regarding New Zealand Government assisted flights to return stranded New Zealanders:

- i. For individuals who are fit for travel according to advice from health authorities
- ii. No commercial flight options to New Zealand are available
- iii. It is unsafe to shelter in place
- iv. 5 Nations partners are evacuating their citizens
- v. The New Zealand health system is not overwhelmed

s9(2)(g)(i), s6(a)



s6(a), s9(2)(g)(i)

28 s6(a)

Officials would recommend limiting our consular assistance to using SafeTravel messaging to convey relevant information to registered New Zealanders, and supporting particularly vulnerable New Zealanders to access the flights, s6(a), s9(2)(g)(i)

29 Whether they could access the places where we anticipate the Air NZ flights chartered by the German government would land (Vancouver and Frankfurt) would depend on the prevailing border restrictions. In respect of Germany, our current understanding is that travellers are able to depart German airports if they are returning home. We understand that there is also an exemption from intra-Schengen border controls for the purposes of transit – so in theory New Zealanders could travel to Frankfurt from other Schengen countries in order to meet a flight to New Zealand. [As the UK is not a Schengen country officials would need to check if there are any impediments to travelling from the UK to Frankfurt].

30 It is possible to make broad estimates of the potential demand for flights from New Zealanders stranded in Europe, but it is not possible to make an accurate determination due to the constraints of our data. In Europe as a whole (including the UK) the number of SafeTravel registrants is over 5,000, but registration is voluntary and the actual number of New Zealanders there will be much higher. For example there are about 500 New Zealanders registered with SafeTravel as being in Germany, but our post estimates that there are in fact over 3,000 New Zealanders there. In the UK, there are about 4,000 SafeTravel registrants but the estimated size of the NZ community in the UK is around 200,000.

31 Even with accurate data for the numbers of New Zealanders travelling or resident in these countries, it is unclear how many of these are 'stranded' and wish to return to New Zealand. SafeCase and SafeCrisis data - which records the number of people who have contacted us and sought consular assistance, including those who may have specifically requested assistance to return to New Zealand - is also not determinative. Our experience shows that this data would likely underestimate the 'demand' from New Zealanders for flights home. When new flight options become available, we would expect more New Zealanders to 'come out of the woodwork' – for example in Peru, SafeCase data shows that only about 10 New Zealanders have made contact, but we are aware that about 60 New Zealanders registered for a private charter flight to Australia/NZ. The cost of the airfare may also affect the uptake of any repatriation flight.

s6(a), s9(2)(f)(iv), s9(2)(g)(i)

33 s9(2)(j)

s9(2)(ba), s9(2)(b)(ii)

34 s9(2)(j)

35 s9(2)(j)

36 Any use of the flights to repatriate New Zealanders would need to be calibrated against our public health requirements at Level 4, including the requirements on return for self-isolation and, if necessary, quarantine. This critical aspect would need to be informed by judgments made by our border and health ecosystem as to what tempo and number of arrivals can be managed on a given day, over and above current arrival numbers.

#### *Foreign-assisted charter flights – processes*

37 Foreign governments, working with contracted airlines, would do the heavy lifting in terms of operating any charter flights to return their stranded foreign nationals. This would include following confirmed procedures for ground transportation and domestic transfers as set out in Annex 1, to organise the door-to-door transportation for their nationals to the international departure airport in New Zealand. Foreign governments would also be required to confirm that departing nationals would be accepted home (and could transit third countries as necessary between New Zealand and their home destination). Health protocols and checks would be applied as appropriate at Level 4.

38 A dedicated inter-agency team would be stood up through the Operational Command Centre to manage the tempo and frequency of the flights, to ensure that the capacity of the system in a Level 4 environment was appropriately managed.

#### *Transits*

39 As foreshadowed in the paper approved by CVD on 31 March on an All of Government Plan for Managing Stranded People, there may be specific partners with which it would be in our interests to revisit the transit restrictions currently in place, in order to allow for movement of 3rd country nationals. This could enable foreign nationals stranded in the Pacific to join evacuation cohorts in New Zealand, as well as re-open

some key transit routes to maximise pathways for New Zealanders to return home. Officials recommend that Government to Government agreements provide the most streamlined approach. Separate advice on this issue is being prepared for key stakeholder Ministers.

s6(a)

### **Strategic communications**

41 Agreement to the recommendations in this paper would require careful communication given that the proposals create additional exemptions to the restrictions on domestic travel set at 23:59 on Friday 27 March. New Zealanders may see this as a move as creating greater public health risk by increasing the movement of people domestically. And those foreign nationals prevented from taking ticketed flights after 27 March may be critical of what looks like an about-turn.

42 Attached as Annex 3 are proposed public communication messages, to support the decisions recommended in this paper to be announced on the afternoon of 2 April. These would be accompanied by a targeted strategy to ensure that those who need to know, do.

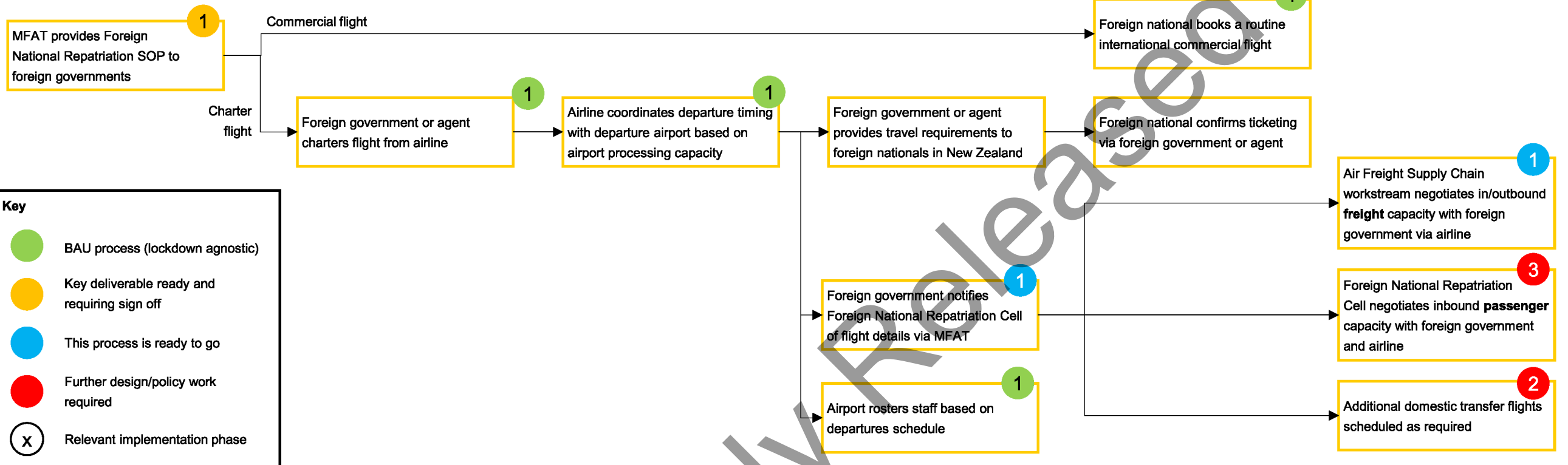
**Annex 1 – End-to-end process**

See attached PowerPoint

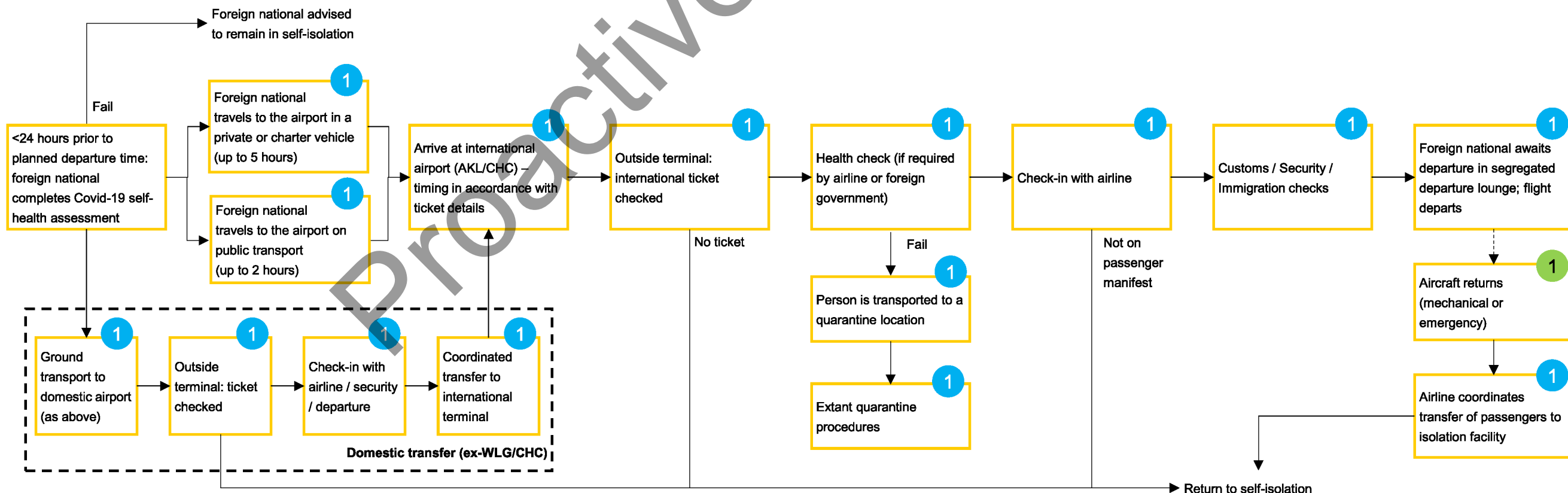
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# Repatriation of foreign nationals from New Zealand during Level 4 lockdown

## Flight scheduling and booking



## Flight departures



# Repatriation of foreign nationals from New Zealand during Level 4 lockdown

## Implementation sequencing

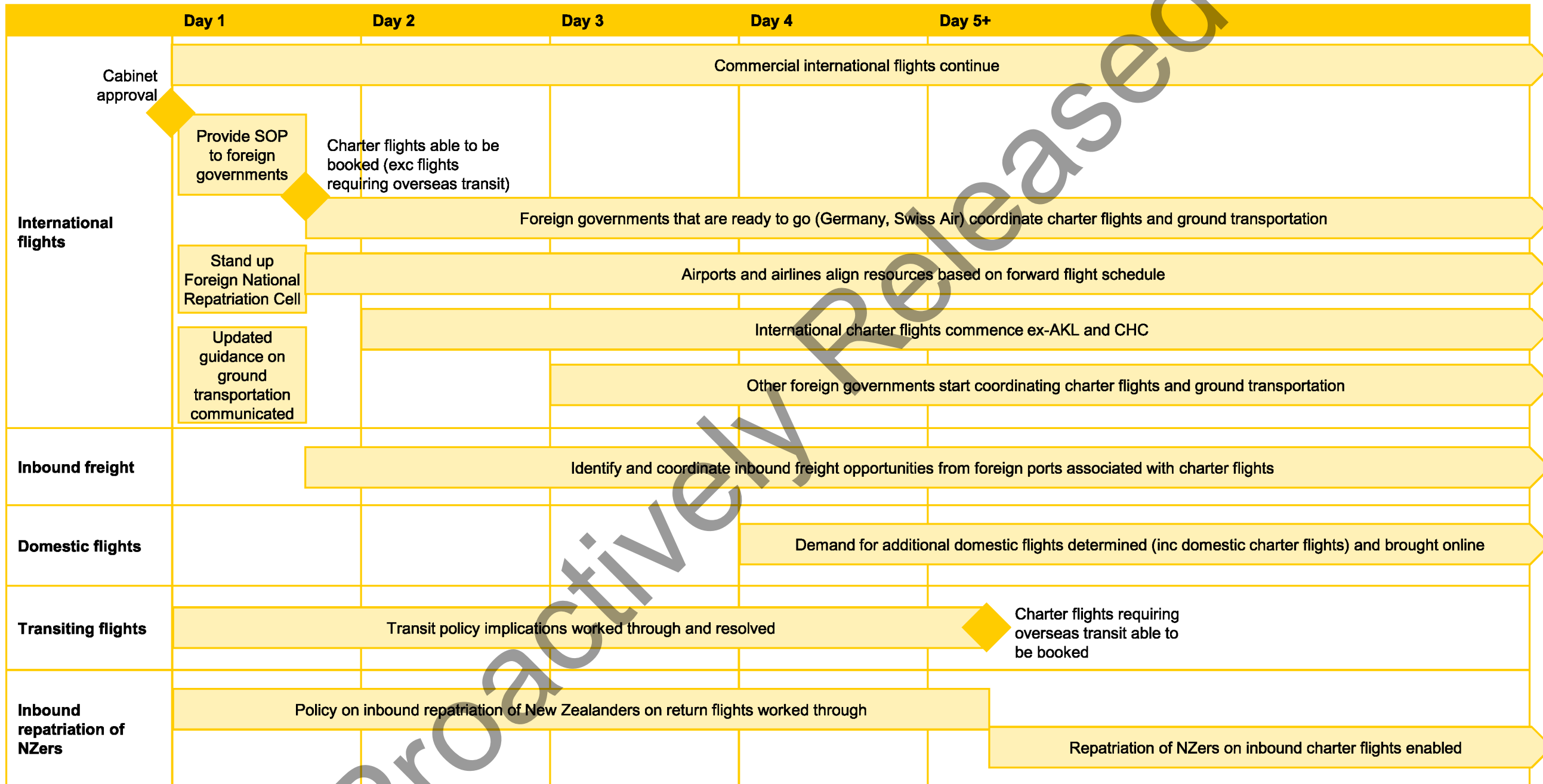
	Already in place	Phase 1: immediately	Phases 2/3: +1 week
<b>Ground transportation to airports</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Private vehicles only</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Enable shared vehicles to be used to transport persons with international flights (public transport, taxi, commercial ride share service, charter bus/shuttle)</li> </ul>	
<b>Domestic transfers</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Commercial domestic flights between main centres</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Enable additional domestic flights to meet international flights (mix of commercial and charter)</li> </ul>
<b>International flights</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Commercial international flights ex-AKL</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>International charter flights ex-AKL and CHC (as arranged by foreign governments based on Foreign National Repatriation SOP rules)</li> </ul>	
<b>Use of inbound flight capacity for freight/passengers</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Commercial flights only</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Utilise inbound capacity in charter flights for freight (negotiated via airlines)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Utilise inbound capacity in charter flights to repatriate New Zealanders from overseas, recognising constraints on inbound border capacity</li> </ul>

## Public Health Assurance

Travel phase	Public health requirements
<b>Pre-departure</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Advised of health restrictions prior to ticketing</li> <li>Provided a self-health assessment to complete prior to departure from isolation location</li> </ul>
<b>Private ground transport</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Private vehicle, rental car, specifically chartered shuttle/bus</li> <li>Only allowable within 5 hours from location of self-isolation to departure airport</li> <li>Passengers must wear masks, and social distancing enforced through dispersion of seating</li> <li>Commercial drivers will follow NZ Covid guidelines, inc PPE and cleaning</li> </ul>
<b>Public ground transport</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Bus, train, commercial ride share, taxi</li> <li>Only allowable within 2 hours from location of self-isolation to departure airport</li> <li>NZ Covid guidelines applicable, inc PPE, cleaning and spacing of passengers</li> </ul>
<b>Domestic terminal</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Check in place to ensure passenger has an international ticket prior to entering the terminal</li> <li>Social distancing enforced through queue management for check-in and security</li> <li>Airline staff trained to identify unwell passengers</li> <li>Social distancing in departure lounge</li> <li>Increased cleaning frequency for toilets and other shared spaces</li> <li>Appropriate PPE for ground staff</li> </ul>
<b>Domestic flight</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Social distancing enforced through seat allocation</li> <li>Airline staff trained to identify unwell passengers</li> <li>Increased cleaning in accordance with NZ Covid guidelines</li> <li>Appropriate PPE for cabin crew</li> </ul>
<b>Transfer from domestic to international terminal</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Management of people flows to avoid mixing of inbound/outbound passengers</li> <li>Increased cleaning frequency for toilets, transfer buses and other shared spaces</li> <li>Appropriate PPE for ground staff</li> </ul>
<b>International terminal</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Check in place to ensure passenger has an international ticket prior to entering the terminal</li> <li>Health check prior to entering the terminal (if required by airline or foreign government)</li> <li>Social distancing enforced through queue management for check-in, security, customs and immigration</li> <li>Social distancing in departure lounge</li> <li>Airline staff trained to identify unwell passengers</li> <li>Increased cleaning frequency for toilets and other shared spaces</li> <li>Appropriate PPE for ground staff</li> </ul>
<b>International flight</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Charter flights – social distancing requirements as contracted by foreign government</li> <li>Commercial flights – in accordance with carrier regulations</li> </ul>
<b>Persons who fail health checks</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Clear responsibilities to provide transport to quarantine facilities for persons who fail health checks</li> <li>Availability of quarantine facilities in the city of departure – or an appropriate link to local medical authorities</li> <li>Capacity within quarantine facilities taken into account as part of determining number of flights / number of New Zealanders able to return on inbound flights</li> </ul>

# Repatriation of foreign nationals from New Zealand during Level 4 lockdown

## Implementation Plan



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## Annex 2 – Overview of foreign nationals in New Zealand

Name of Foreign Mission/Country	Total number nationals in NZ seeking to return	Locations in NZ
s9(2)(ba), s6(a)		

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Note: Pages 14-16 redacted under s9(2)(ba) and



### **Annex 3 – Strategic communications messaging**

- Given comparative data on the spread of COVID-19 globally, the New Zealand Government's advice to foreign nationals has been to shelter in place. However, if foreign nationals stranded in New Zealand wish to return home, the New Zealand Government will seek to facilitate this.
- The Government has decided to allow the limited movement of stranded foreign nationals within New Zealand for a confined length of time, so that they can access international flights to return home. Travel must only be undertaken for the purpose of reaching the airport, and foreign nationals must have a ticket for an outbound international flight before they are permitted to leave their lockdown location.
- There will be tight restrictions around this movement and we will be enforcing those restrictions.
- We have taken some time to work through the various issues around this, and that has frustrated some people. But our first priority has always been public safety in New Zealand – we do not want to put extra pressure on our health services, or to raise the risk of transmission of COVID-19.
- At the same time, we *do* want to be able to help stranded foreign nationals where possible. Many have run out of commercial options to return home, and some are also running low on funds. Their Governments are offering fly them home and it makes sense for us to find a way to make that happen, while keeping safety front and centre of our minds.
- Returning foreign nationals to their home countries will reduce the potential pressure on health services in New Zealand, and it will also reduce the risk of welfare issues developing for those people who are stranded and unable to afford to be here much longer.
- We also have a responsibility to show caring and kindness for everyone that has come to visit our country, and to help them get safely home to their families.
- The movement of foreign nationals domestically will be limited to a maximum of five hours in a private vehicle, or two hours in a form of shared transport, to reach the appropriate airport.
- We expect the international flights which will take stranded foreign nationals out of New Zealand will depart from Christchurch or Auckland. For that reason, we are also going to allow limited domestic air travel by stranded foreign nationals to reach those two airports, and then take their international flights home. This is most likely to occur from Wellington or other major airports, as flights are not available from many regional airports at present.
- It is estimated that around a quarter of the 381,000 temporary visitors in New Zealand are stranded foreign nationals who may wish to leave.

- A number of Governments have approached us to request assistance for so-called 'mercy flights' to pick up their nationals. These may be aircraft chartered specifically by Governments, or they may be commercial options if still available.
- In both of these situations, the issue we have been weighing has been whether we can safely allow the movement of foreign nationals within New Zealand to get them to an international airport to catch their flight home.
- Passengers will not be allowed to travel if they are at risk of COVID-19 – or more specifically, they would only be able to travel if they:
  - are not diagnosed with COVID-19
  - do not have symptoms consistent with COVID-19
  - have not been tested for COVID-19 and are awaiting results
  - are not a close contact of a suspected/probable/confirmed case of COVID-19, and
  - have not travelled internationally within the last 14 days
  - On arrival at the airport, passengers will be required to undertake a health questionnaire confirming they meet the above requirements, and will be subject to social distancing requirements prior to departure.
- Governments from over 20 countries have made approaches to the New Zealand Government about assistance for those nationals to leave.
- And similarly, our Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade is working hard to help New Zealanders who are stranded in other countries to return home.
- We will be taking a strict approach to ensuring that public health remains the top priority throughout this exercise.