



Proactive Release

The following item has been proactively released by the Rt Hon Jacinda Ardern, Prime Minister:

Novel Coronavirus Response Update: 3 February 2020

Some parts of this information release would not be appropriate to release and, if requested, would be withheld under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act). Where this is the case, the relevant section of the Act that would apply has been identified. Where information has been withheld, no public interest has been identified that would outweigh the reasons for withholding it.

Key to redaction code:

- 6(a), to protect the security or defence of New Zealand or the international relations of the Government of New Zealand
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- 9(2)(g)(i), to maintain the effective conduct of public affairs through the free and frank expression of opinion



Briefing

NOVEL CORONAVIRUS RESPONSE UPDATE: 3 FEBRUARY 2020

To Rt Hon Jacinda Ardern, Rt Hon Winston Peters, Hon Kelvin Davis, Hon Grant Robertson,
Hon Dr David Clark, Hon David Parker, Hon Chris Hipkins.

Date	3/02/2020	Priority	High
Deadline	3/02/2020	Briefing Number	1920NSP/046

Purpose

1. This paper reports on a Watch Group meeting held earlier today and updates you on the latest developments associated with the government response to novel coronavirus and alerts Ministers with Power to Act to current activities and emerging issues.

Recommendations

2. **Note** the contents of this briefing

Contact for telephone discussion if required:

Name	Position	Telephone	1st contact
Brook Barrington	Chief Executive – Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet	s9(2)(a)	✓
s6(a)	Acting Director – National Security Systems Directorate Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet		
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Minister's office comments:

- Noted
- Seen
- Approved
- Needs change
- Withdrawn
- Not seen by Minister
- Overtaken by events
- Referred to

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NOVEL CORONAVIRUS RESPONSE UPDATE: 3 FEBRUARY 2020

Purpose

1. On Monday 3 February, the National Security System convened its fourth Watch Group on issues associated with the novel coronavirus. This paper updates you on the latest developments including: actions government took over the weekend, an update on the virus' epidemiology, issues associated with border closure, an update on assisted departures from Wuhan, an update on the 48-hour review of entry restrictions, and updates on other emerging issues.

Weekend actions

2. Over the weekend, Cabinet authorised a group of Ministers with Power to Act to take decisions on New Zealand's response to the novel coronavirus outbreak and proposed enhanced border measures. As that group of Ministers, you subsequently agreed to place temporary entry restrictions into New Zealand on all foreign nationals travelling from, or transiting through, mainland China, to assist with the containment of the novel coronavirus and to protect New Zealand and the Pacific Islands from the disease [CAB-20-MIN-0015 refers]. Public health advice provided by the Ministry of Health informed this decision.
3. These measures will deny entry to New Zealand for anyone who has left or transited through mainland China from 2 February 2020, with the exception of:
 - New Zealand citizens (including those from the three countries of the Realm);
 - permanent resident visa holders; or
 - resident visa holders granted in New Zealand; or
 - resident visa holders arriving in New Zealand for a second or subsequent time as the holder of the visa;
 - partner and spouses, dependent children or legal guardians who are travelling with the above;
 - airline and maritime crew;
 - an Australian citizen or Australian permanent resident who, prior to 2 February 2020, had their primary place of residence in New Zealand;
 - citizens of the Pacific (to enable them to travel home). See paragraphs 35-41 of this paper for further consideration of this exception.
4. The entry restrictions came into force at midnight on 2 February. They will be reviewed every 48 hours for an initial 14-day period (further information on the process proposed for this is paragraph 29-34).
5. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (MFAT) has also updated its travel advisory and now recommend that New Zealanders do not travel to any part of mainland China. MFAT is closely monitoring the diplomatic implications of this change and of the border closure decision. A letter from the Minister of Foreign Affairs was hand delivered to the Chinese government prior to the decision on the border being announced. s6(a) MFAT will continue to engage and monitor.
6. The Ministry of Health also extended the travel history in the case definition for novel coronavirus to include those who have travelled to New Zealand from mainland China (excluding Hong Kong, Taiwan and Macau), either directly, or via another country within the

last 14 days. Previously it only included people who had travelled to and from Hubei province in China, particularly Wuhan.

Health update

7. The Ministry of Health is the lead agency for the response to novel coronavirus.
8. Internationally, numbers of infected individuals is growing, with 14,557 cases reported globally. It is likely that these figures are underreported, as many people may be asymptomatic or only experiencing mild symptoms. World Health Organisation data shows that there have been 305 confirmed fatalities inside China, and one confirmed death outside China. Transmission of the virus is increasing, with more states within China confirming cases and more reports of secondary, human-to-human transmission, both in China and in other countries. The virus has generally low mortality rate of 2-3%, but figures suggest that around 20% of those afflicted will suffer a major illness.
9. Domestically, ESR has a test for the virus and is testing several samples daily. To date, there have been no confirmed cases in New Zealand. The focus for New Zealand's health system is twofold:
 - ensuring appropriate domestic public health measures are in place to support New Zealanders and visitors in the event of cases in New Zealand; and
 - supporting passenger clearance at the border.
10. Other countries, such as Australia, Samoa, Fiji, and Vietnam, are making similar decisions based on World Health Organisation advice.
11. The Office of the Prime Minister's Chief Science Advisor and the Ministry of Health have now been tasked to provide a regular weekly update on the epidemiology of the coronavirus, including any developments over that week. This update will be circulated to Ministers with Power to Act and relevant portfolio Ministers every Friday, unless any urgent developments occur. The Office of the Prime Minister's Chief Science Advisor will also complete a regular review of research being published.
12. The Ministry of Health is working with other agencies to ensure consistent messages are produced and disseminated across a broad range of channels. The advice focuses on:
 - The level of risk that New Zealand faces, in the context of numbers of cases and mortality rates;
 - The government response activity underway, including the border control measures;
 - Future planning for changes in the current situation; and
 - Precautions that New Zealanders should take, both for individuals and agencies.

Implementation at the border

13. Implementation measures at the border have begun as of today. All passengers arriving in New Zealand (approximately 45,000 daily) will now be manually screened and interacted with by border staff. Automated processing (SmartGate) was switched off this afternoon. Manual processing is required to allow border agencies to check: passengers that are travelling with split tickets or dual passports, to determine their point of origin; passengers' recent travel history; or any obvious health symptoms. Inspectors must interact with all passengers to determine whether passengers present risks or not.

14. At the time of writing, a number of passengers (across four flights) checked in before midnight, and so received clearance to travel on flights departing after midnight when the closure came into effect. Immigration NZ advises there are approximately 11 passengers who will not be allowed entry to New Zealand and will have processes in place to manage them.
15. Manual processing will have an impact on passenger clearance times. To try to mitigate these impacts, border agencies are using social media channels to alert travellers to the changes in border requirements. Agencies are also actively sharing public health information through passenger channels (such as airline and travel companies, diplomatic posts, industry associations and accommodation providers,) as well as using health advice cards, posters, banners and, where available, electronic signage at the airport.
16. Manual processing will also have an impact on border agency resources, with additional staff being called to duty and other staff being diverted from any other non-essential work for the time being.
17. Work is also underway to develop daily reporting to Ministers on: volumes of passengers turned away, volumes of passengers moving through manual screening, screening delay time due to e-gate closures, numbers of passengers identified as meeting criteria for non-entry, numbers of additional staff required to implement these measures. It is anticipated that this daily reporting will be available from tomorrow (4 February).
18. There have been some operational issues raised today, particularly at offshore locations (enquiries being made of Embassy's and Consulates) around definitional issues particularly relating to "immediate family" and "partner". These have been clarified operationally in the course of the day, and reflect the fact that we are still within the first 24 hours of implementation. It is likely further definitional issues might arise, but relevant agencies are communicating with each other well and resolution is occurring. Any matters requiring Ministerial decision will be referred.
19. Border Sector agencies are developing options for dealing with staff who may be exposed to / or infected by the virus while at work. This includes thinking about wider impacts of staffing shifts.

Issues requiring further consideration

20. Some further Ministerial decisions will be required to fully implement the border closure, for example, the Minister of Immigration has today sought your approval to make urgent changes to the *Immigration (Carriers' Information Obligations) Regulations 2010* in order to implement the border closure decisions made.
21. Agencies are assessing whether any additional decisions or powers might be required. For example:
 - a) MFAT is considering whether exemptions might be required for visiting diplomatic and official delegations travelling to New Zealand, where it is in New Zealand's national interest for them to travel. For example, a Chinese delegation is scheduled to come to New Zealand next week for China-NZ Free Trade Agreement negotiations. Further advice will be provided on this in due course, and will include health advice.
 - b) Airline passengers will not be the only ones affected. Maritime arrivals (in particular, cruise ships but also cargo vessels and other craft) will also be impacted. Officials are

liaising with Australian counterparts on these matters, and further information will be provided to Ministers. The inward cargo and mail streams are not affected.

Assisted departure planning

22. MFAT has received informal approval from the Chinese government for the New Zealand assisted departure flight out of Wuhan with a window of 9.00pm to midnight, Tuesday 4 February (local time – NZ is 5 hours ahead) for this flight. This is expected to be communicated formally today. The flight crew are pre-positioned in Hong Kong, and preparations are being made for the aircraft to fly from New Zealand.
23. MFAT currently has 250 people on the manifest for the flight (out of a 277-passenger capacity). These passengers hold New Zealand, Australia, Pacific Island, Timor-Leste, Canada and British nationality. Other countries have experienced a 20 percent drop off from their original manifests, so demand is expected to remain within capacity.
24. MFAT has a team on the ground in China planning for the flight, working closely with an Australian team. Both countries will work together to support both the Australian and New Zealand flights and will return on the New Zealand flight.
25. In addition to the flight planning, New Zealand Police are leading an inter-agency planning group to prepare for the arrival of the flight in New Zealand and subsequent isolation of the passengers.

Effort at Whangaparoa

26. Passengers will be quarantined at the naval training facility in Whangaparoa, north of Auckland, for 14 days after arrival. All passengers are being individually profiled to identify any high-risk individuals, and to determine their needs during the isolation period. s9(2)(a)
27. Because the accommodation at Whangaparoa is shared, which is not suitable for medical isolation, a large number of camper vans (RVs) have been secured to provide accommodation.
28. The planning team is making arrangements for entertainment and hobby facilities to be available at Whangaparoa to provide a positive environment for the passengers. Agencies have been asked to provide resources to the Ministry of Health to support the requirements of the operation, which will need to be staffed 24/7.



48-hour review period

29. Every 48 hours, the Ministry of Health will prepare advice for you on whether to retain the border closure measures.
30. The Ministry's initial assessment is that health criteria for reassessing travel restrictions should take a pre-emptive and conservative approach while our understanding of the disease spread continues to evolve.
31. The criteria outlined below err on the side of caution. Alongside the 48-hour travel restrictions review, the Ministry of Health propose that the criteria themselves are reviewed regularly to ensure that New Zealand is not out of step with other countries.

32. The Ministry of Health propose that the health criteria for modifying or lifting the travel restrictions at a high level are:
 - the evolving epidemiology of the outbreak in both Mainland China and globally
 - any emerging evidence about the transmissibility of the virus
 - any emerging evidence about the severity of illness from infection
 - any new advice from the WHO on travel restrictions
 - public health measures taken by other countries designed to limit the spread of the virus.
33. Alongside these criteria, the Ministry of Health recommend that Government also consider:
 - qualitative information sources including clinical advice; local reporting and intelligence; the situation in the Pacific region; WHO guidance; and decisions made by other countries; and
 - economic and social impact measures.
34. The health criteria should be paramount, but officials recommend that these secondary measures also be included in the review matrix. A fully-fleshed review matrix will be prepared tomorrow (4 February) for Ministerial consideration.

Other emerging issues

Implications for Pacific Island Citizens

35. The Cabinet minute [CAB-20-MIN-0015] formalised today included in the list of exemptions “citizens of Pacific Island countries (to enable them to return to home countries)”.
36. We would not however, wish to inadvertently send an infected person back to their home country. In order to avoid this risk, we would need to provide self-isolation facilities for 14 days to an indeterminate number of Pacific Island citizens.
37. Advice from officials on this issue has therefore evolved, to now favour a case-by-case assessment rather than a blanket exemption for citizens of Pacific Island countries. 
s6(a), s9(2)(g)(i)

38. Officials therefore recommend that we do not create a region wide exemption for Pacific citizens at this stage, but that we remain open to consider any specific requests we may receive from Pacific governments on a case by case basis.
39. If Ministers agree, the Cabinet minute will need to be amended.
40. In the meantime, Immigration NZ is **not** currently applying a blanket exemption for citizens from Pacific Island countries who have left or transited through mainland China (which means they are subject to turnaround). If there are specific requests from Pacific Island Countries seeking exemptions for its citizens, agencies will provide further advice to Ministers with Power to Act on this issue.
41. If Ministers with Power to Act require further formal advice on this matter, this can be provided urgently tomorrow.

Longer-Term Issues

42. Agencies are considering a number of longer-term issues that flow from the decision to close the border. These include:
- Whether to provide official guidance to New Zealand Ministers and officials about travelling overseas from New Zealand for international meetings and visits. [Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Ministry of Health]
 - Any implications for fuel and fast moving consumer goods supply chain management, and measures that may be required to address shortages of supply (there are existing national mechanisms in place for these situations). [National Emergency Management Agency and Ministry for Business, Innovation and Employment].
 - Options for stimulating demand in other tourism markets in the short-medium term, and preparing for reactivating the Chinese tourism market when the public health situation improves and travel restrictions are lifted. This includes considering the implications that may arise from Chinese airlines pulling out of New Zealand routes in the short-term – both in terms of Chinese nationals being able to return home in the short-term, but also implications that could arise should those airlines not return to the New Zealand market in the same way in the future. Any reduction in services would have a significant impact on the tourism and international education sectors. [Tourism NZ].
 - The trade and economic impacts on the New Zealand education industry (in particular tertiary education), which has thousands of Chinese students due to arrive to start courses in the next few weeks. [Education NZ].
 - Any impacts the border closure is having on xenophobia and racist behaviour in New Zealand (including online), including liaison with Chinese communities. [Ministry of Health, Office of Ethnic Communities, NZ Police].

Decisions required from Ministers

43. Minister will be required to provide decisions or advice on:
- a) Health matrix review (paragraph 35 refers). If Ministers have any particular questions or issues they would wish to see canvassed in the advice being prepared for tomorrow, please advise.
 - b) Approach to Pacific Island Citizens (refer paragraph 36 – 39); any initial reaction from Ministers to this issue would be appreciated along with advice as to whether a further submission to Ministers with Power to Act is required.

Consultation

44. The following agencies provided material to support the drafting of this briefing during the Watch Group and independently afterwards. Given time constraints, we were unable to consult agencies on the final version:
- The Ministries of: Health, Foreign Affairs and Trade, Education, Primary Industries, Business, Innovation, and Employment, Social Development, Defence, Transport, Pacific Peoples, and the Department of Internal Affairs

- Education New Zealand, Fire and Emergency New Zealand, National Emergency Management Agency, New Zealand Customs Service, New Zealand Defence Force, New Zealand Police, Tourism New Zealand, Worksafe New Zealand
- The Treasury, State Services Commission, and the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet.

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