

**PRIME MINISTER'S PRESS CONFERENCE: FRIDAY, 27 MARCH 2020**

**PM:** Good afternoon, everyone. Look, before I start, I will just point out that in order to model best practice, these podiums will be moved at a greater distance to one another—so just for future reference for those who are lining up cameras for next week. Unfortunately, there's just a few too many electronics beneath us to enable us to do that immediately. But as a reminder for anyone who's at home listening and may not have heard this before, we deliberately have put the Minister of Finance in my bubble, and I am in his bubble, because we are in proximity to each other so often. But just for the purposes of ensuring that we're also modelling best practice, we will be moving further apart as well. I have a couple of updates and then a thankyou.

Over the past few days, we have been discussing the importance of personal protective equipment, or PPE, as it's called, for our front-line health staff and also for our essential service workers. They are looking after us, and so we, in turn, need to make sure that we are looking after them. So I wanted to give you a few more specifics around our PPE stock in New Zealand. The Director-General of Health, you may have seen, included in his press statement this morning some of the stocks that are currently held in New Zealand. DHBs hold 5.1 million masks, 1.9 million gowns, 2.7 million pairs of gloves, and 60,000 items of eye protection. In addition, the Ministry of Health has a national reserve of 18 million masks.

Yesterday, 640,000 masks were released from the national reserve and today, I'm told, were sent to DHBs to replenish their stocks. Over the next month, the Ministry of Health will be supplying 4 million masks to the health sector and a further 4 million masks to non - health sector essential workers. We're also working closely with a Whanganui-based manufacturer of masks who, helpfully, in New Zealand produce 60,000 masks a day and 45,000 what are called N95 masks—those are masks specifically used by our health workers and are the next level above the surgical masks that you might see day to day. We are actively assisting them, I'm advised, with distribution logistics, so that they can focus entirely on production.

The Ministry of Health is compiling a priority list so essential workers at the most risk of contracting COVID-19 receive masks and personal protective equipment first. DHBs are being given refreshed guidance on the appropriate clinical use of PPE to help them plan usage and ordering. As you may have heard me mention yesterday, we still have some work to do with the distribution aspect of PPE, but I know that this is a priority for those who are leading our response operation and will include the normal supply networks and working with new private sector support to just continue to grow our PPE stocks.

I also wish to follow up on some of the points that Director-General Ashley Bloomfield made earlier today about the continued rise in the number of COVID-19 cases in New Zealand. As I have said many times before, sadly, an increase in cases is expected. In fact, it is the whole reason why we are in a lockdown. What we are seeing now are the cases already in New Zealand before that lockdown started, and these will keep showing up each day and will continue to rise for at least 10 days or more, and I'm expecting that those increases will continue to be steep. However, if we keep to the lockdown rules and limit our contact with others, we should start to see the impacts of that—if we follow the rules.

I want to remind people again why it's so important. If you today have COVID-19, you may not know that for several days. Say in that time you decide to walk with a friend not in your bubble, that friend then visits a family member not in their bubble, that sets off another chain of transmission that will still be showing up weeks from now. So I say again: please stay home, break the chain, and save lives.

I also want to use these briefings to draw attention to and acknowledge some of the extraordinary efforts essential workers are undertaking in the fight against COVID-19—and

there are many unsung heroes across New Zealand. I will do my very best to acknowledge just some of them as much as I can.

Today, I want to single out our medical lab scientists—a workforce of 1,823 in eight labs across the country, processing incoming tests 24 hours a day, seven days a week to get the job done. They're on separate shifts and separate teams and on rotating rosters to help preserve physical distancing and stay safe as they carry out this vital work to help in the tracking, tracing, and elimination of COVID-19. And while their work is around the clock, it is also continually notching up a gear. As testing ramps up, which in the last seven days has averaged 1,479 tests a day, so too must our labs, with three more currently being set up. These lab staff are working tirelessly to ensure we know the true scale of the outbreak and to ensure those with COVID-19 know and get the appropriate care. I want to say, on behalf of New Zealand, thank you for your work.

I'll now hand over to the Minister of Finance, Grant Robertson, who will give us an update on the implementation of the wage subsidy.

**Hon Grant Robertson:** Thank you very much, Prime Minister. As all of you know, the COVID-19 pandemic has moved fast, which of course has meant that the Government has had to act swiftly at every step of the way. When we put in place the wage subsidy scheme just over a week ago, we said we would continue to monitor the scheme and make changes to it if we need to, and we have. On Monday, we lifted the \$150,000 cap on the scheme so workers who are employed by medium and larger businesses could also get the benefits. Today, I am announcing some modifications that we've made to the scheme to ensure as many people as possible stay in their jobs. These changes are further measures from the Government to soften the impact of COVID-19 on workers, families, and businesses, and position us all for the economic recovery once we exit level 4.

The following changes apply from 4 p.m. today. Firstly, the current sick leave scheme is being folded into the wage subsidy scheme to prevent double-dipping. The leave scheme was designed at a time when we had very few people unable to work or self-isolating—clearly, that has now changed. We are, however, looking into a sick leave provision scheme for essential workers, particularly those aged over 70 or who have compromised immunity, and we'll have more to say about that in the coming days.

Secondly, the requirement on employers to make best endeavours to pay their employees 80 percent of pre-COVID income remains. However, if this is not possible, then employers who take up the scheme must pass on the entire wage subsidy to their employee. I want to be clear: this applies to all workers. All workers must receive at least the full value of the subsidy. Even if the lockdown requires businesses to operate with no activity, the subsidy allows them to keep their workers on the books. It is vital that we keep an attachment between employers and workers so that a recovery can start quickly.

So, thirdly, today we are also saying that we are requiring employers to keep employees in employment for the period of the subsidy.

The changes that we are announcing today take the potential cost of the scheme from between \$8 billion and \$12 billion. Clearly, that will vary depending on how many businesses take it up. It's not a cap and it's not a floor; it's merely an estimate of the amount of money that we believe the scheme may cost. I want to make it clear to employers: nothing in this scheme overrides your legal obligations, including to pay for any work completed at the wage rate agreed between you and your staff.

We have had a lot of questions about leave. The scheme does not change any legal obligations employers have. Employees should not be compelled to take their leave to receive the subsidy. We are running this scheme in a high-trust model in order to get money out the door to support workers, families, and businesses who are affected by COVID-19. We will soon begin publishing the names of firms who have received the subsidy, as indicated to them when they applied for the subsidy. As I said yesterday, I want to hear from anyone who believes an employer is taking the wage subsidy but not passing it on to their staff. This is a high-trust model, and we need to work together to get through this

and be ready for when the economy begins to recover. I just wanted to say two other quick things before I finish. The first of those is to update again on numbers in terms of what is being done. As at this morning, \$2.7 billion has been paid out to 428,768 workers, and this includes 58,741 self-employed people.

I need to stress again that the demand for the scheme is very high. People involved in MSD are working hard to respond and process applications as fast as they can under challenging conditions. I want to again thank the Minister of Social Development, the Hon Carmel Sepuloni, the chief executive of the Ministry of Social Development, Debbie Power, and all their staff for the extraordinary work that they have done to process that many applications. It is important for everybody to try to be patient and be kind to one another. All of these people are working as hard as they can.

And just on one very minor point—if I may, Prime Minister, just to confirm something I believe Patrick asked yesterday—the mortgage repayment deferral scheme is open and under way. All the banks are taking applications for that from today.

**Media:** Prime Minister, are you doing any contingency planning in case the lockdown is extended beyond four weeks?

**PM:** Well, obviously, many of the plans that we already have in place have that ability to continue on. Of course, the best chance we have of limiting the time that we're all in this lockdown is if we obey the rules while we're in it.

**Media:** We could very well stay in lockdown or go back into lockdown, couldn't we, after this one lifts?

**PM:** As I've often said, we'll know that, and the public will know that, based on what we see with our cases—not only our case numbers but whether or not they're coming from community transmission or whether or not we're able to identify the source. So the public will know that by the updates that we're regularly giving, and we'll have a sense of that before we reach the end of those four weeks. I'll come to Jessica, and then I'll come back over.

**Media:** Prime Minister, was that a message you expected the finance Minister to need to deliver to employers—you need to pass this money on? It seems like a bit of a no-brainer for most people.

**PM:** Yeah, it does. But at this particular time of heightened stress, where employers are having to manage the welfare and wellbeing of their employees and their business, we want to keep highlighting that we are making this system and scheme as simple as possible. But we want people to take it up. We would much rather that businesses take up the wage subsidy than lay off their staff, and everyone—essentially, everyone—who is currently shut down is eligible for this scheme, and we ask that people use it.

**Media:** How much feedback have you had about people taking advantage and doing things like, as you say, double-dipping and things like that?

**Hon Grant Robertson:** Look, I want to be clear that most employers who have applied for this scheme have done exactly the right thing with it, and they've actually sat down with their workers and vice versa and said: how are we going to make this work; how do we all get through this together? There are one or two examples that are emerging of where people haven't done that, but the point the Prime Minister is making here is even if your business now has no activity—you're frozen in time—you are still eligible for this scheme, and we want you to take it up. The obligation is to pass on the full value of the subsidy to your workers. Keep them attached to you. Keep us together so that when we come out of this, we're ready to go straight away and we don't need to get into a situation where people have to be re-employed who are out of work. Keep them in work—that's what the subsidy's for.

**Media:** How many businesses were double-dipping?

**Hon Grant Robertson:** Not too many, but we were running the risk that we would end up with a great deal more, because that sick leave scheme was designed for a very different time. I saw you raise your eyebrows before, Jenna, when I said it was only a week ago. It really was only a week and a bit ago, but, actually, it was designed for a time when we had very few people in self-isolation. We now, obviously, have, effectively, the entire country in self-isolation, so we needed to collapse those schemes together.

**Media:** Prime Minister, will we have to keep our borders closed until there's a vaccine?

**PM:** Ultimately, as you'd expect, the border right now does present the greatest risk for us managing COVID-19 both now and on an ongoing basis. I think it's too soon to say that, but you can imagine that I am very determined that once we get COVID-19 back under control, that we keep it under control.

**Media:** What about having the border closed, as it is, or we could go back to the self-isolation protocols that were originally in place?

**PM:** Yeah, look, it's too early to say, but it is, I think, fair to assume that the border will be an ongoing risk that we will need to manage—in fact, that the whole world will need to manage.

**Media:** Can you just offer some clarity around timing? We've got people, obviously, being able to use the ferry services and use some of those flights until midnight tonight. If they use the ferry, for example, and then have to get to a destination, will they be given some wriggle room?

**PM:** Yeah. The whole point of ferries and domestic flights continuing until right through Friday is simply to allow people to get home. We have backlog; we had people at ferry terminals who weren't able to get back to their usual place of residence. We needed to allow that to happen. So, of course, that needs to then happen for their onward journey, but the expectation is that people go straight home and that they stay home.

**Media:** What will happen to people who are caught out trying to travel domestically after tonight?

**PM:** The same as everyone else. There is an expectation that people stay in their homes. We, of course, continue to advise people against long-distance travel; it just poses too much risk. So stay home and stay local.

**Media:** Do you know how many New Zealanders are in quarantine and symptomatic at Auckland Airport, and is it likely from here on in that increase in cases will partly be driven by sick New Zealanders coming home?

**PM:** So the numbers that are coming in at Auckland Airport who are being required to, essentially, quarantine in the approved facilities, as I'm advised, are predominantly people who don't have self-isolation plans, rather than just people who are symptomatic. So there are both in that group, but predominantly it's people who have rushed home and have no plan, and so are being put in facilities to ensure that they are staying in self-isolation.

**Media:** Are they, essentially, locked in their rooms?

**PM:** They're required to stay in their rooms, as you'd expect.

**Media:** When will the Government release the modelling you've specifically commissioned that suggests how many people are going to contract the disease? Why is that being withheld?

**PM:** It's not being withheld. As I've said, those numbers will be released, but what I've also been very quick to point out is that we are utilising the same modellers that are actually providing commentary in the public domain as well. Michael Baker, for instance, is part of the Ministry of Health technical advisory group. So that's just one example where his modelling has been used already publicly and is also being used by the Ministry of Health. We're looking to release modelling sometime in the near future—I haven't got a precise

date, but I'll be looking to release that in the same way we do official documents as part of our proactive release process.

**Media:** What are the thresholds for going down from level 4? You say we're going to see it in the public, but is it no community transmission at all, or is it that you have no new cases over five days?

**PM:** I've asked my Chief Science Advisor to start working in a bit more detail around how our alert level system works for not just escalation but de-escalation. But to give you a general sense, I've already talked about the intelligence that we get from individual cases. So it's not just how many cases we have but what's happening with clusters of transmission, and whether or not, again, we're able to identify source or whether or not we still have community transmission. So those will be some of the indicators we'll be looking for to see whether or not we can move back down the levels, either regionally or nationally.

**Media:** How likely is it we're only going to have four weeks of lockdown?

**PM:** We set four weeks because there was a realistic chance we could move alert levels within four weeks, but it will all come down to whether or not people are paying attention to the rules and are following true self-isolation. But people will continue to get a sense of how well we're doing based on the numbers which we release to you daily.

**Media:** Is the Government working with Australia to help facilitate charter flights for people in South America?

**PM:** Not that I'm aware of at this stage. I am aware of consular cases in the likes of Peru and others. So we do have smaller numbers of New Zealanders scattered around in that part of the region. I'm not aware, currently, of anything being specifically done with the Australian Government in that regard, but I am aware of cases there, and MFAT is working with those individuals.

**Media:** We've learnt that Marist College students are socialising together despite having those 16 cases there. What's your message to those students?

**PM:** That they are putting the health of all New Zealanders at risk and it must stop. I need everyone to take this seriously, not least those who actually have cases already within their community, and so too our young people. They may have what some would consider greater resilience to COVID-19 than others, but what we need them to do is make sure that they are not a chain of transmission to those who are vulnerable. So this is really a plea to them: take this seriously. If they commune with one another, if they spend time with one another, they're putting at risk their grandparents and others' grandparents and people that they love.

**Media:** Prime Minister, yesterday you talked about the need to clear those non-essential goods that are starting to clog up our ports. How do you envisage that happening? Will non-essential businesses be able to briefly open so that goods can come in to their storage facilities?

**PM:** I'll ask the Minister of Finance to just give a quick update on that.

**Hon Grant Robertson:** Yeah, so I spoke immediately after our press conference yesterday, actually, to the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment about this and clarified that that is exactly what we want to have happen. We wouldn't be wanting the stores to open for sales, but we would be wanting the stores to be able to open their facilities to receive those goods so we can free those containers up for essential goods coming into New Zealand.

**Media:** Will the Air New Zealand flight taking off to Germany return with New Zealanders on board?

**PM:** Those flights, as I understand, have not been finally scheduled yet. For repatriation of foreign nationals back to their home countries, we are first and foremost requiring that we have a plan in place for those individuals to move safely around New

Zealand in order to board flights. For that reason, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is not facilitating any repatriation flights until at least 31 March, so those details can be worked through.

**Media:** Do you mean the repatriation flights for Kiwis overseas?

**PM:** Germans. Yep, yep.

**Media:** And what about the Kiwis overseas—are those mercy flights completely off the table now; has that window closed completely?

**PM:** Again, as I've reiterated many times, there are some routes open, and those are the ones New Zealanders can use. There are no further plans outside of that for individual specific repatriations.

**Media:** Can we just get a little bit of clarity on whether people can drive to the park or to the beach for a walk?

**PM:** Look, I will receive, no doubt, over the course of these four weeks, as I already have, very specific examples, very specific questions, which is why I'll always come back to the principles people can apply for almost any situation. We're asking people to stay local. So, yes, people will need to use their cars for trips to things like the supermarket, maybe their GP, but we are asking whenever they do that, keep it local. The longer distance you take in your vehicle, the greater risk you present. Anyone who may have an accident, break down, get a flat tyre, or any time you need to refuel your car, you present a risk to your community. So stay local and stay apart.

The final thing I'll also say is, of course, there is some discussion around people going to beaches and so on. Look, I understand if there is a beach on your doorstep, you may choose to walk up and down it like you would your own street, but congregation we cannot have. I do not want to see the scenes of Bondi Beach in New Zealand. We must, must make sure people stay apart, and if we congregate in beaches or congregate in parks, that presents a huge risk, so please don't do it.

**Media:** I understand you won't want to put like a 3-kilometre radius on it, but is the message stay in your suburb; is it stay within a number of streets?

**PM:** Yeah, stay local. Stay close to home. I do think people understand those general guidelines and principles. Don't go on road trips. Don't take long-distance trips to get to a beach—an hour, two hours—just don't do it, because if every New Zealander did that, it would present huge risk for our workforce, not least the police or even the AA, but it also means people congregate, so don't do it. Stay local.

**Media:** The asthma foundation says that the Imperial Tobacco factory at Lower Hutt is still open. Why is tobacco classed as an essential product, and why is tobacco production classed as essential?

**PM:** So we haven't gone into the specifics of every individual part of the supply chain for a supermarket. You'll, of course, have noted that we shut down New Zealand in a 48-hour period, so we kept the guidance very simple: if you supply to our supermarkets, then those workforces are able to continue to produce supplies for our supermarkets and our dairies. So there you'll see that that's where that supply chain falls in.

**Media:** Are you likely to amend that?

**PM:** We've kept it nice and simple: those who are supplying to our supermarkets and to our dairies are continuing production of their products.

**Media:** Butchers are non-essential companies. So we were aware of one in the Hutt that's open. We went there today and they said, "We're going to remain open until the police come and tell us to shut it down."

**PM:** I'll take their details from you after this press conference.

**Media:** What would be your message to them, though?

**PM:** That I know that this is a very, very difficult time for our small businesses, our butchers, our bakers, our grocers—you know, they are providing, generally, usually, food services for their community, but if every single one of them opened up across the country, it defeats the point. It opens up a huge chain of transmission. So I'm asking them to do right by their community and to close.

**Media:** A Hamilton rest home is short 25 percent of its workforce due to self-isolation—

**PM:** Yes.

**Media:** Is anything being done to address these restrictions where rest home staff can't move between facilities of the same employer?

**PM:** We have to be incredibly careful with our most vulnerable, and they are our elderly and particularly those in rest homes, aged-care facilities, or those who have support workers visiting their homes. So we do need to be particularly stringent there. That's why the Ministry of Health is particularly monitoring what is happening with those facilities, especially where we have cases.

**Media:** We've had reporting that people in these hotels near Auckland Airport are able to walk around, able to go to the supermarket—that they might be told to stay in their rooms, but there's no kind of actual security around that. Would that be disappointing?

**PM:** I spoke with the Commissioner of Police this morning. They are working to beef up the—for want of a better word—the monitoring of those facilities. But, again, you know, I think that I would be sending the same message that every single New Zealander would want to send those individuals: welcome home, but stay put. We cannot afford for people who have returned from overseas to break the self-isolation requirements that every other New Zealander is currently complying with. Their food needs are being met so that they do not need to leave their rooms.

**Media:** How long should people bank on not travelling overseas?

**PM:** Again, some of that is just purely speculative at this stage. Our goal right now, of course, is to get COVID-19 under control here in New Zealand, break the chain of transmission, and then we'll have to work on the future of how we manage what is a global pandemic.

**Media:** On the wage subsidy scheme, Mr Robertson, how would you propose migrant workers push to get the full amount of those wage subsidies if their visas are tied to their employers, given that some of them are in particularly vulnerable positions [*Inaudible*]—

**PM:** They're required to.

**Hon Grant Robertson:** Yeah, no, but as we've said today, anyone who's taking up the wage subsidy scheme is required to pass that on to their employee. So we want to be really clear about that. The scheme requires best endeavours to pay at 80 percent. If that's not possible, then in that case, and in all cases, the money should be being passed on at the full rate of the subsidy.

**Media:** Some of those migrants would be afraid to [*Inaudible*]

**Hon Grant Robertson:** Well, I don't know—

**PM:** We're working right now on greater transparency around the scheme and who's receiving it, so that should help with some of those issues.

**Media:** If an employer can't pay, top it up to 80 percent, are you still encouraging them to top up as much as they can—

**PM:** Yes, of course.

**Hon Grant Robertson:** Of course we are—absolutely. And it's really important too that nothing in what we're doing with the scheme changes an employer's obligations. So if someone is actually working, they need to be paid for the hours that they are working. But

where there is a situation where the business has literally stopped activity entirely, then what we're saying is the full wage subsidy must be paid.

**Media:** [*Inaudible*] or is an essential worker at this point, right?

**Hon Grant Robertson:** Yes.

**Media:** [*Inaudible*] how many millions of workers?

**Hon Grant Robertson:** Oh no, we don't, sorry. That's a level of detail I'd like to have, but not right now.

**Media:** [*Inaudible*] Are you happy for him to serve his sentence in New Zealand, or would you rather see him travel to Australia?

**PM:** I'm still of the view that this needs to run its course. Victims haven't yet seen the terrorist in this case be sentenced. So for them, there is still a way to go, so let's make sure that, first, justice is done in New Zealand before we talk about what happens potentially beyond New Zealand.

**Media:** Prime Minister, have you heard from Australia about your request for Kiwis to access social welfare, or what provisions are being made for those who can't access income?

**PM:** At the moment, they continue to be excluded from the provisions for COVID-19 in Australia, unless they're an employee where a business has received some support and is passing it on to workers. In those cases, they are. It continues to be an issue that we will raise. Multiple Ministers have raised it, and we will continue to do so. In our minds, we are providing support for Australians who are here, and we would hope under these extraordinary circumstances that that could be and should be provided to New Zealanders in Australia.

**Media:** Would you retaliate and rescind our offer to Australians?

**PM:** No, because it's not the right thing to do. During a pandemic like this, we need to encourage everyone to stay home and we need to support them to do so. So it's actually a public health issue as much as a fairness issue. But, again, I'll keep making the point: New Zealanders who are in Australia are, on average, more likely to be employed. They earn more, on average. They are Australia's best migrant workforce, and I'd like to think that they could be supported during this horrific time for everyone, alongside their fellow Australian workers.

**Media:** I know it's still early days, but have you got any estimates or forecasts about how much Government debt will rise to pay for the packages that you're announcing today, going forward?

**Hon Grant Robertson:** No further advance on what we've discussed before. I mean, obviously, the forecast for the Budget will be finalised shortly, and that will give us an idea of where we think we are in terms of GDP and net debt, but I don't have any further details on that today.

**PM:** We, of course, are not alone. Every Government—well, at least those we tend to compare ourselves to—have forms of support packages for their workforces. There's a furlough workers' scheme in the UK, obviously Australia have their package, Denmark also. We moved very early on our package, and now we're making sure we're amending the settings of it to make sure it's fit for purpose. That's the right thing to do. It helps workers stay connected to their jobs while we try and get through this.

**Media:** How much of that \$40 billion in the imprest supply bill do you think you're going to have to [*Inaudible*]

**Hon Grant Robertson:** The reason we do an imprest supply bill like that is to set an outer limit rather than a target. It's there so that we can spend the money outside of the normal cycle of Budget appropriations. We'll come back to that at Budget time so you'll be



able to see how much we have spent, but it is not a target; it's merely an envelope that's available for us to use.

**PM:** We'll take a couple more—if anyone has to prioritise anyone else's questions.

**Media:** Has your Māori MPs advised you of any contact they've had with iwi in their electorates?

**PM:** Yes, we're getting constant updates from our Māori MPs, particularly on the work of Māori PHOs and those who work in Māori health, also in areas where we have seen communities really working to try and prevent too much movement within their communities prior to the lockdown. But they're doing a great job of keeping us in touch with the work going on on the ground. Whānau Ora providers in particular have been doing work to provide, essentially, almost care packages for whānau who, in this time, may not necessarily have had the resource to prepare for this period of self-isolation.

I also expect strong representation from our Māori representative MP on our select committee that will be looking at the Government response on COVID-19.

**Media:** Specifically on both over-70s or people immuno-compromised who are essential workers—you said there's something coming down for them right now. Say they're asked to go to work tomorrow; if they're over 70 should, they stay at home?

**PM:** They should not be at work. Those over-70s were already, even before we went into isolation as a nation, were a part of the specific group that we wanted to stay at home. Iain Lees-Galloway, as our Minister for workplace relations, is working on some specific guidance around workplaces and our over-70s and those who have compromised immunity.

**Media:** And is your message for employers, basically, keep these people employed; you're going to be able to pay them [*Inaudible*]

**PM:** Look after your workforce. The wage subsidy scheme is there so that those who are at greatest risk do not have to be at work.

**Media:** Can I ask three questions related to the business sector.

**PM:** Go ahead.

**Media:** [*Inaudible*] insolvency law, either practice or reform? Commercial rents: do you think the Government might have to step in and say what a proportion looks like, as we start to see rent strikes? And are you getting any reports about a lack of supply of wood for domestic essential industry?

**Hon Grant Robertson:** On the last point, no, I haven't seen those reports, and I don't know if the Prime Minister had. On the first point around insolvency, this issue has been raised several times. We have work under way now to look at the state of our insolvency law and whether it is fit for purpose. Clearly, we are in extraordinary times and the law is set for good reason so that businesses do operate in a way that is transparent, that means that those who invest in them or work with them understand the shape of the books. Clearly, we're in very challenging times. So we are looking at that, but I will come back as soon as we have more detail on that.

On the matter of commercial rents, I raised this yesterday, and I do think it is very important that commercial landlords think ahead and think about the fact that the businesses that currently occupy the premises that they own may very well be able to stand themselves back up again within a month or two months. That's important for them to remember that they have an ongoing relationship there. At this stage, there is no particular lever available to us as a Government to deal with that, so we are encouraging those landlords to behave in the best interests of the whole of New Zealand.

**Media:** Is the Government going to be doing anything for those 109 New Zealanders on board the *Vasco da Gama* cruise ship who can't disembark Fremantle until Monday, the day after commercial flights finish on Sunday?

**PM:** Remind me, please—that cruise ship name again?

**Media:** The *Vasco da Gama*.

**PM:** Yep, I know that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade are actually aware of, as far as I know, all New Zealanders who are currently on cruise ships. So they're providing consular assistance and will be working through any specific issues around getting New Zealanders into a position where they can utilise existing commercial flights. So that is something the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is working on.

**Media:** There have been a few reports of people in flats around the country getting worried about having nurses or flight attendants as flatmates and trying to get them out because they feel that they're too risky. What—

**PM:** Yeah, and again those workforces that you mention are ones where we have an expectation that they have access to personal protective equipment so that when they are at work, when they are around those vulnerabilities, they are able to protect themselves and, in doing so, they are therefore protecting those that they might more broadly be in contact with. There will be a number of essential workers out and about working on behalf of New Zealanders where we need to support them to keep them well, while we keep all of New Zealand well. All right, thank you, everyone.

**conclusion of press conference**