

**POST-CABINET PRESS CONFERENCE: MONDAY, 24 MAY 2021**  
**HANSARD TRANSCRIPT**

**PM:** Kia ora koutou katoa. Ngā mihi nui ki a koutou. This afternoon it is my great pleasure to confirm that the incoming Governor-General is Dame Cindy Kiro. Dame Cindy will be known to many of you. She's had a highly distinguished and lengthy career in academic and leadership positions, and has made significant contributions across a number of fields and organisations. From 2003-2009, she was the Children's Commissioner. She has extensive health sector experience and has held a number of roles in community and voluntary organisations. She has held statutory positions and been appointed to ministerial advisory groups under a number of different Governments. Dame Cindy holds a PhD in social policy and an MBA in business administration. From 2009-2012, she was associate professor and head of Massey University's school of public health. From 2012-2014 she was professor of education, head of school Te Kura Māori at the Victoria University of Wellington. Between 2014 and 2018, she was deputy dean of the Faculty of Education and Social Work, and then director, Tai Tokerau campus at the University of Auckland. And, between 2018 and 2021, she was the pro vice-chancellor Māori at the University of Auckland, before taking up her current role at the Royal Society.

She was appointed as Dame Companion of the New Zealand Order of Merit for services to child wellbeing and education in the New Zealand New Year honours list in 2021. Dame Cindy will take up the role of Governor-General in October and remain in it for a five-year term. I very much look forward to working with her. I'd also like to take this opportunity to thank the current Governor-General, the Rt Hon Dame Patsy Reddy, for her dedication and service over the past five years. She has been a fantastic Governor-General, and has been wonderful to work with. A State farewell will be held for Dame Patsy in September, and we'll provide details of that in due course, and I'll have much more then to say about her service and our gratitude for that service. For now, though, I'll hand over to Dame Cindy to say a few words.

**Dame Cynthia Kiro:** Thank you, Prime Minister. [*Speaks te reo Māori*] Talofa lava, mālō e lelei, ni hao, namaste, ni sa bula vinaka, and warm Pacific greetings to all of you. It is a great honour to be asked to be your Governor-General. Aotearoa New Zealand is not only my home, and has been my home the whole of my life, it is an extraordinary and beautiful country, and one that I am absolutely committed to. I am proudly Māori, and I'm also part-British, so I bring, with this unique marriage, an understanding of the foundational basis of Te Tiriti o Waitangi and its place in our history. When the Prime Minister asked me and met with me a few weeks ago, I was certainly not expecting that she would ask me to be the next Governor-General. Of course, I wanted a little bit of time to discuss this with my husband, who's here today, Dr Richard Davies, as I know that this impacts him and all our family, and it will impact us for a long time to come—probably for the rest of our lives. After the initial shock, and also the huge sense of gratitude and humility at being asked, we agreed that this was an opportunity to really serve our country. This idea about service is a very old-fashioned idea, I know, but I think it's still an important one. In a way, the Prime Minister has very eloquently explained some of my career, but this notion of service has really gone to the heart of everything that I've done in the past. It's been a career of service, especially for children and young people, but mostly for those people who don't have a voice to speak for themselves.

I was born to a very poor family. My mother was born in a nikau hut with a mud floor in the Far North. My father was born in the north of England, in a coal-mining town. I know what it takes—hard work and dedication and perseverance—to actually succeed in life. And I've used that academic success as a way of, basically, progressing through life while also raising a family and trying to contribute to my community. I appreciate the struggles that people have in their lives and the road that they have to travel to reach for their goals and for their aspirations and their ambitions, and it doesn't matter how hard or how high those are, we all know that it takes a lot of work.

The role of Governor-General comes with the patronage of many organisations: working with children and young people, particularly around their wellbeing; working in the areas of mental health around innovation and also in education; working with the homeless and with people who have high and complex needs. These are all areas that I have both championed and worked on in the past and, I think, while we're still working through, over the next few months, what the strategic programme will be, you can expect that these will be themes of the work that I continue to do as the Governor-General for New Zealand.

I'm a really strong believer in the importance of knowledge, but, more importantly, of wisdom. Wisdom is really the distilled knowledge borne of experience in ethical behaviour. The past two years have been truly challenging for this country in many ways, but we've really proved that we can come through using good knowledge and wisdom. And I really am humbled to take this opportunity and I look forward to working in your service as a country. Kia ora mai tātou katoa.

**PM:** Kia ora, Dame Cindy. We'll now open up for questions from the gallery. At the conclusion of the questions relevant to this appointment, Dame Cindy will then leave and then I'll be happy to take general questions pertaining to the issues of the day.

**Media:** Dame Cindy, what do you hope to bring to this role?

**Dame Cynthia Kiro:** Well, I bring myself first and foremost. And a strong commitment to the very values that I've just expressed: that notion of service; the notion of the value of community; the importance of being able to work for those, in particular, who maybe are not able to speak for themselves or don't have a profile. So I think it's really important that if we're going to be a united country, we need to be able to find a way to actually bring all of us into that space, and I'm really keen to do that.

**Media:** Prime Minister, how much did Dame Cindy's advocacy for children contribute to you choosing her for the role?

**PM:** Dame Cindy is an advocate for people. So my knowledge and understanding of her and her work stems back to many decades ago. Her ongoing role as an advocate for people—and that has been under multiple different Governments. Dame Cindy was a ministerial advisor on education in the last term of Government. She's given advice on the wellbeing of children, has a background also in health, and, in her latest role in the Royal Society, an advocate for the use of science, academic research, and innovation to further our country's goals. To me, that service has been a common theme throughout her career and, in my view, places her so well to take on this role on behalf of New Zealand.

**Media:** Dame Cindy, do you believe in 2021 that it's appropriate for Queen Elizabeth II to be the head of State of New Zealand?

**Dame Cynthia Kiro:** Well, clearly I accept the Queen as the head of State of the Commonwealth and I'm here to support her and I'm here to act in a role as the Governor-General to perform the duty, which is around uniting the country. This is the constitution we have, and I look forward to, basically, using it to serve the country.

**Media:** But do you believe she should be the head of State [*Inaudible*]?

**Dame Cynthia Kiro:** I've accepted the role and I will serve under her.

**Media:** Dame Cindy, what was your first reaction when the Prime Minister asked you to be the Governor-General?

**Dame Cynthia Kiro:** I think I might have slumped back in the chair and I said, "Really?". I was very surprised. It wasn't the conversation I was expecting us to have.

**Media:** And you talked about thinking and considering about the impact that this could have on your life for the foreseeable future. How difficult was it to have those conversations and think about your long-term future as a result of taking this role?

**Dame Cynthia Kiro:** Well, you know, it was very difficult because I was only allowed to tell one person, and that's my husband, Richard. So it was quite difficult in one way but it was great in another, because he immediately said, "This is such an amazing opportunity, and whatever you decide, I will support you." And you have to realise he's giving up an enormous amount for that as a clinical doctor, someone who has a practice with people with high and complex needs at the Auckland City Mission. You know, I was really concerned that he's not going to be unduly impacted by anything that I did. So I haven't been able to share the information. I've had to try and think through the consequences, and, obviously, he and I have talked a great deal about that. So I'm relieved, to be honest, today because at least now I can tell my family openly what I'm planning to do and have those conversations. But I know that this is a lifelong change, but it's one that I'm really genuinely humbled to do.

**Media:** Further to Nick's question, do you think that the time is right for a wider conversation in New Zealand about whether New Zealand should become a republic?

**PM:** Firstly, I say, just to be fair to Dame Cindy, of course, these are questions that any elected Government of the day has to make decisions around whether or not they're entering into them. And something that we have been asked continuously is: is now the time for the Government to put that question to the people of New Zealand? My view, certainly, has been that, even though I have a view that New Zealand will one day move to becoming a republic, I've never sensed an urgency from New Zealanders around that question in the here and now, and it hasn't been presented as a priority to me by the people of New Zealand and so, therefore, it has not been a priority for us. In particular, I do think there's lot of issues that would need to be resolved in terms of our constitutional arrangements to be able to move to that place. So we make these decisions around our future governance now and who leads in these roles with a view to them serving the Queen, who, I can tell you, informed me her view that Dame Cindy was wholly suitable for this role. Oh, sorry, and over to you, Dame Cindy, for anything further.

**Dame Cynthia Kiro:** No, just the obvious: I wouldn't take on a role that I didn't absolutely commit to, and I'm here and totally committed to fulfilling the constitutional duty that this role recognises and the opportunity to use it while it's available, while it's here, and, as the constitutional head of State, to use it as a unifying message for the country. Like I said before, I'm passionate about this place—passionate. I want it to succeed.

**Media:** Just in terms of the advocacy work that you've done and the experience you have in a number of areas, are you worried at all, I guess, with the Governor-General role, that it might, sort of, curb how you might be able to talk about particular issues and opinions and things around areas that you are, obviously, very experienced in and advocate on?

**Dame Cynthia Kiro:** No, I'm not. I mean, I've already signalled to you that there's a strategic programme of work that I think I might be able to serve those causes in a different way, it might be a more careful route. But, you know, I don't think advocacy is quite justified. Currently, I'm the chief executive of the Royal Society Te Apārangi. This is an organisation that has existed for a long time and is committed to knowledge and to social sciences and humanities, and I've taken that role because I believe passionately in the value of knowledge and its ability to inform our lives and the decisions and our understanding. I was pro vice-chancellor of the largest university in the country before I took that role. I did that and I worked as an academic, including as a researcher, in three universities in this country because I was passionate about the value of knowledge, because I believe that we need to have an evidence basis to go forward. So I don't feel that this is in any way a compromise. This is a new opportunity. It's an opportunity to, basically, use all of that collective experience, that long experience, and to bring it to bear in a constitutional head of State role which is really focused around serving the country. And I think it's a wonderful opportunity.

**Media:** Dame Cindy, the Prime Minister said that when she spoke to the Queen, she says you were wholly qualified—

**PM:** Wholly suitable.

**Media:** Wholly suitable—my mistake. Have you spoken to the Queen?

**PM:** I didn't quite give the enthusiasm in the way that she—it was a very enthusiastic “wholly suitable”.

**Media:** Have you spoken to the Queen about your appointment?

**Dame Cynthia Kiro:** I haven't yet, no.

**Media:** Have you met the Queen?

**Dame Cynthia Kiro:** I have met the Queen before and I have met Prince Philip when he was alive, on two occasions, and I've met Prince Charles. So I feel very honoured to have met them.

**Media:** What did you make of them?

**Dame Cynthia Kiro:** Well, they were lovely, obviously. I mean, one meets them in a formal situation, but all very gracious, very experienced, obviously, with interacting with the public.

**Media:** Just out of curiosity, you said it wasn't the conversation you were expecting to have when the Prime Minister rang you. What kind of conversation were you expecting to have?

**Dame Cynthia Kiro:** I don't know. I really didn't know. But, you know, obviously anything can happen when you get asked to go and meet with the Prime Minister.

**PM:** I'm not sure if that's a take home: anything can happen when I give you a call. I'm the Minister for Child Poverty Reduction, so I guess it wasn't entirely a surprise, but this question obviously was. I can tell you, it was clearly very genuine surprise. It's not often I get to surprise people, but clearly on that day I did.

**Media:** Dame Cindy, as the first Māori woman to hold the role of the Governor-General, how significant is that for other Māori girls out there across the country?

**Dame Cynthia Kiro:** Well, I hope it is significant. I really hope that it's going to be seen as a positive thing for them. You can reach the very top. And remember, not only Māori and a woman but also pōwhara—so, very poor from a very humble background. And, you know, it truly is incredible to be standing here with this opportunity. So I hope that young Māori girls, no matter where they come from in life—and, actually, all girls—take some inspiration from that.

**Media:** You also spoke of being a united country and you also made a point to not only reference your Maori whakapapa but your British whakapapa. Where do you see us as a country in terms of race relations and where we're heading into the future?

**Dame Cynthia Kiro:** Well, I think we've done a pretty good job on most of that, but we've got some way to go. And, obviously, some of that enters into the realm that you probably should ask the Prime Minister about.

**Media:** [*Inaudible*] Samoa at the moment, and then through our last Parliament, there was a potential for that to have happened, an issue of confidence.

**PM:** Was there?

**Media:** Well, at this very stage, with [*Inaudible*]. Anyway, what sort of framework will guide your thinking were a really difficult question of confidence [*Inaudible*]?

**Dame Cynthia Kiro:** Well, the first thing that I have learnt already is that you must always seek good advice. So my first call would be to a gentleman sitting in the front row down here, and I would get good advice, and, no doubt, he would get advice, and I would then take that advice and listen to it. And I think we can be really pleased, and today especially, that we have a solid constitution and a head of State and that it's very stable. But taking good advice is going to be the key to that, and making sure that I'm well informed. That will include, obviously, advice around any tricky constitutional and legal and other areas, so yeah. I need to listen to good advice and I would take it.

**PM:** That reference was to Michael Webster in the front row, for those watching at home.

**Media:** Dame Cindy, as the chair of the Welfare Expert Advisory Group, what's your view of how the Government has responded to, perhaps, your recommendations?

**Dame Cynthia Kiro:** Well, I would think that you should ask the Prime Minister that because I'm not answering any policy questions, especially about the Budget. So I was really honoured to perform that role, I'm very proud of the work we did, and I'm proud to be standing here as your future Governor-General.

**PM:** Happy to take any questions in the second half, on that matter.

**Media:** Dame Cindy, who are you looking forward to hosting here in this hall?

**Dame Cynthia Kiro:** You know, I thought about that question just last night, and I thought, "This could be the most amazing opportunity to get the most interesting people in the room together." I haven't got the list, I'm sorry. You can give me your name later, and perhaps there will be an event for the media, and that might be the most interesting night of my year.

**Media:** But who would be on your wish list or dream list? Do you have any names—

**PM:** Clearly, you don't accept the media as a dream list.

**Dame Cynthia Kiro:** Most of my dream list—I mean, I've told you I worked as a senior leader in the university sector for a long time, and, I have to say—and also at the Royal Society—I work with people who are innovators, who are researchers and discovering new things, who are leaders in the knowledge field and innovation sector. I'm just constantly amazed, when I go out and meet them, at the work that they're doing, and honestly I feel it's an absolute privilege to hear from them about the work that they're doing. So last Monday I was at SCION, learning about what a bio-circular economy would be. The Friday before I was at NIWA learning about the work that's going on related to oceanography and climate change. I feel privileged to actually be sharing that information and that knowledge and that expertise from people like that, so I'd probably choose people who are really interesting and have a lot of knowledge. Or otherwise, I'd invite a book club because I do love to read.

**PM:** All right. Thank you, Dame Cindy, for your time and thank you for accepting the position and for joining us this afternoon. Kia ora.

**Dame Cynthia Kiro:** Kia ora. Thank you everybody.

**PM:** Everyone, I'll run briefly through the week ahead and then open up for more general questions. Tomorrow, I'm joining the Minister of Finance in Dunedin. We'll be visiting Hillside Engineering where a wagon assembly facility will be built as part of our Budget 2021 investment in rail, creating dozens of permanent local jobs. I'll also be attending an Otago Southland Employers' Association members' briefing. On Wednesday morning I'm speaking at the National Emergency Management Conference here in Wellington, then at the Canterbury Employers' Chamber of Commerce, before visiting the International Antarctic Centre, following the announcement of \$344 million in Budget 2021 to rebuild Scott Base and safeguard New Zealand's presence in Antarctica. Thursday I'm in Nelson speaking at the Chamber of Commerce before officially opening the Cawthron National Algae Research Centre where we've invested \$6 million through the Provincial Growth Fund. On Friday I'll be speaking at the Hi-Tech Awards in Auckland, and on Sunday I'll be in Queenstown to meet Prime Minister Scott Morrison for our annual leader's meeting, and I know I'll be seeing a number of you there as well.

Happy now to open for general questions.

**Media:** What do you make of the situation in Samoa [*Inaudible*] locked out of Parliament?

**PM:** Cabinet today discussed events in Samoa, as many of us are watching very closely what is the events that are unfolding there. Again, you know, our strong view is that we hold a huge amount of trust and faith in the institutions in Samoa, in the judiciary, in their

democracy, and, of course in the outcome that the election delivered. And our call would simply be for all of those things to be upheld.

**Media:** Are you concerned that things are getting out of hand in Samoa and what can New Zealand do to aid the situation?

**PM:** Reports we've received is that despite the fact that there is a very changeable political situation, that there's relative calm amongst the people, and I do acknowledge that there has been calls from political leaders to maintain that calm and equally from faith-based leaders as well, which is obviously having some impact. We would continue to support those calls, but of course also encourage that the election outcome and those institutions, the judiciary—that those institutions and their views be upheld.

**Media:** New Zealand imposed sanctions—[*Inaudible*] significant sanctions on Fiji after its military coup some time ago. Samoa doesn't have a military, but some are already likening this to a coup. Is that something Cabinet is looking at—travel sanctions, aid sanctions?

**PM:** Look, that is not something that we're in the space of discussing or considering. You know, at this stage the judiciary is still very strongly holding to their role, working very hard to uphold the outcome of the election, and so really for us it's a matter of encouraging that that work continues. We are simply not in a position to be playing any interventionist role in that regard.

**Media:** Is it time for Tuila'epa to step aside, in your view?

**PM:** Again, as we've been saying consistently, all we're doing here is calling for the outcome and the wishes of the people of Samoa to be upheld, and that's obviously the work the judiciary's doing right now.

**Media:** [*Inaudible*]

**PM:** Oh, obviously the judiciary's made a decision there. That is on the basis of the election outcome, and we would call on all parties to uphold those decisions.

**Media:** So does he need to concede and follow the rule of law?

**PM:** Yeah, well, we have called for the rule of law to be followed by all political leaders.

**Media:** Why do you think the current laws [*Inaudible*]

**PM:** Yes, I've been asked today, and again, if you'll allow, I do want to separate this from the case that may come before the courts, because, of course, no one would wish to compromise the outcome there. The question we've been asked is whether or not we need a separate piece of legislation, and one of the issues is when you create separate pieces of legislation, sometimes you can create unintended consequences for that. Now, currently, of course, you are able—via a manslaughter charge, for instance—to receive a term of life imprisonment, and there is the ability of judges in sentencing to take all of those factors into account. The concern would be, if you start creating individual sets of circumstances, whether or not you limit the ability of the judiciary to access some of those higher penalties if that's appropriate.

**Media:** Just on the ACT conference at the weekend—David Seymour obviously made some announcements, including around the four-year term which you have spoken about previously; and then, complemented that, I guess, with the Opposition balancing out the select committees [*Inaudible*]. What—I mean, obviously you have supported a four-year term. Have you done any work with political parties around progressing that in any way, and where do you sit, I guess, on balancing that with select committee?

**PM:** Our starting point has been—actually, our select committee process is often watched by other Parliaments because, in some ways, what it achieves and what it does is quite unique. We have not been looking at the idea of changing the way those select committees work or the balance of those select committees. I think they—as someone, obviously, who's served in both Government and in Opposition, I think they serve their

function well in their current form. When it comes to the four-year term, that is something that we have been doing work on; I've always said that I want this to be something that we consult other parties on, so that will be the natural next steps.

**Media:** Sorry, can you just expand on that a little bit more, because you've already said, previously, you support the idea and you'd like to talk with people. So how far along are you? Have you spoken to other parties, what sort of time frame—

**PM:** Not yet, but it will be certainly this year that we'll be undertaking that consultation with other parties. One of the other issues, of course, that we have said we will undertake is some work alongside other parties on the issue of donations and donation legislation. So there's a few areas of electoral law. We will be reaching out to other parties and seeing if we can build some consensus about the approach that we take.

**Media:** What would you see as a sensible, I guess, election year for something like that to happen if you were to have that consultation this year—

**PM:** Certainly not the next election. You know, I think the most important thing that we need to do is ensure—and this is why the consultation is so important; the most important thing we do is maintain public confidence that no political party here is trying to advantage themselves. And so, naturally, that would mean that you wouldn't move to make changes in the immediate next election. That you would push it out beyond how far out is a question for other political parties as well.

**Media:** In your planning for this weekend's meeting with Scott Morrison have you whittled down the agenda, have you got things that you'd like to achieve?

**PM:** I don't tend to actually whittle down a list, we keep it fairly broad. Also, of all the bilaterals that I undertake in this job, the bilateral and conversation I have with the Prime Minister of Australia is by far the most free-flowing and wide-ranging, just because of the sheer number of issues for which we really can share policy ideas—you know, we're comparable in so many ways—and just the sheer number of areas that we'll want to touch base on. So it's quite a long list, and we're going to have to move pretty quickly, but I think we're making the time available. Our intent, I know, is actually to make it really productive. We're both—I'd like to think—quite pragmatic in the work that we do together, so we'll be looking for some tangible things to take away.

**Media:** We've also been told about a thing called a spouses' programme, where Jenny Morrison—

**PM:** That's not new.

**Media:** and Clarke Gayford can get together. It might be interesting to members of the public, what do they get up to, and how can that be useful alongside a bilateral meeting?

**PM:** So, firstly, a spouses' programme is not new. What I have found, or at least Clarke has found, is that what's new is having a man engage in a spouses' programme. He often finds that they, particularly when you go to a Chogm meeting, are quite an interesting construct. So for this, particularly when it's just two spouses, to be honest, I haven't seen the full programme; I'm not sure he has either. But, you know, both Mrs Morrison and for Clarke, they have their own interest areas, and we try with the programme that's developed here in New Zealand reflect the areas of interests that Mrs Morrison wishes to engage in.

**Media:** When you spoke to the Queen about Dame Cindy was that the reason for the call, or were there other things on the agenda that you discussed?

**PM:** So the primary—there were two reasons. So that was one of the primary reasons, but also we made a very deliberate decision to wait a period of time before we, in person, as it were, conveyed condolences to Her Majesty over the Duke of Edinburgh. So that was our opportunity to also do that at the same time.

**Media:** What did you say to her?

**PM:** What you'd expect you'd say to anyone who's just lost their life partner: just how sorry we were, and just actually shared a few insights from the service, from some of the correspondence that I'd received, and also from some of the reflections in the debating chamber. Whilst there's of course not—the convention is that you don't share details of these phone calls, I'm sure Her Majesty wouldn't mind if I conveyed that she was genuinely moved by the amount of time New Zealand had spent reflecting on his contribution.

**Media:** In terms of KiwiRail investment, are confident about the money you're investing in KiwiRail given that Treasury continues to raise [*Inaudible*]?

**PM:** Yes, I am, but, of course, there's no reason which we wouldn't look for greater means to make sure that we're demonstrating where these investments are being made and the benefits of those investments. I think, generally, there's a good understanding of just how worn down that asset was and the investment that's required, but there's no reason for us not to take heed of what Treasury's advising there and work to provide some of that transparency.

**Media:** Prime Minister, on social insurance, can you guarantee or rule out that it won't be compulsory, and, in fact, a tax [*Inaudible*]?

**PM:** What we've said is actually we want to keep working through the design of the scheme alongside business and our Council of Trade Union reps, which is what we've done to date, so we've put out some very broad parameters that we've all agreed as amongst Business New Zealand, Council of Trade Unions, and Government, and from there, actually, there's a lot of design work to be done. But those broad parameters are that they would have minimum and maximum—they'd have a bottom and a cap for those who are eligible to receive—that we'd be looking broadly at income replacement of roughly 80 percent, that it could last anywhere between six and 12 months, and that it would be a ACC-style scheme. But, as you can see from those very broad parameters, there is a lot of work that needs to be done. Thankfully, we have other schemes to draw on. We have schemes in the likes of Scandinavia and others that can demonstrate how these alternative models can work.

**Media:** If it's a compulsory contribution, isn't that just a tax increase?

**PM:** Well, I don't know, Bernard, that people would see ACC in that way, because, of course, tax in most people's minds is a revenue-generating mechanism, whereas, of course, what we're trying to do here is create a scheme where people have for themselves some form of protection against loss of earnings which directly benefits the individual. So, you know, I would dispute that and I would dispute that most people would see ACC in that way, as well, in that regard.

**Media:** How many people did you consider for the Governor-General's office?

**PM:** A very long list. Cabinet Office will tell you I probably have been a little frustrating in the fact that I've had a very long list I've gone through. I've taken the process very, very seriously, and so I've gone through a number of CVs and interrogated a number of different options. I wanted to ensure that in the role we had someone that brought integrity to the role, that had a mana and a values base that New Zealanders had respect for and could look to should they ever need—should any constitutional issues arise in New Zealand.

**Media:** And did you ever offer it to someone who said no?

**PM:** No, no, I wanted to make sure that I worked through a process and then offered the role to someone that I had hoped, of course, would take it. To be clear, I wasn't necessarily of the view that necessarily Dame Cindy would. I knew she had very recently taken a role, after a very rigorous process, with the Royal Society, which is a significant one for New Zealand as well, but I'm very pleased she said yes.

**Media:** So do you just come up with the list or was there an expression of interest—I assume it's not like that.

**PM:** No, it's not like that, so I undertook the same process that any other Prime Minister does. They work with the Cabinet Office on going through long lists of potential candidates and then narrow them down iteratively, but it's not a traditional role where you have a group of people who interview or a board in that regard. Just to add a little bit of extra detail to the process, Cabinet was informed today, so it doesn't go through a normal appointments and honours process. However, it is traditional and right that the Leader of the Opposition is informed so that they have an opportunity, if they have any significant objections, to raise them, and so we undertook that process last Wednesday—sorry, it may have been Tuesday. It was in advance of discussing the appointment with the Queen.

**Media:** Did the Leader of the Opposition raise any objections?

**PM:** No. That is why we stand here today.

**Media:** Can you provide any preliminary feedback on the feedback that the Reserve Bank has given the Government on debt-to-income ratio restrictions and restricting [*Inaudible*]?

**PM:** No.

**Media:** Prime Minister, it seems like members or MPs of the FAST Party are being [*Inaudible*] right now on the lawn of Parliament in a tent.

**PM:** Yes—yes, so I was—

**Media:** Are we heading towards a situation where there are going to be duelling Parliaments and perhaps duelling claimants to the Prime Ministership, and how does that work with recognition? Who do you call?

**PM:** Yeah, well, certainly one would hope not, or we would certainly hope not to be in that situation. But, as we've said, we've been calling on all sides to uphold the rule of law, and so when you have the judiciary and the Supreme Court endorsing a particular outcome, then that would be where New Zealand would naturally flow in following through with our ongoing contact. I did read that that was likely to happen before I came down to the House, and, again, what at least I can say is it is pleasing to see that in amongst what has been a very changeable environment, we've seen a level of calm amongst the public in Samoa.

**Media:** Other countries which have pursued an elimination strategy for COVID-19, like Taiwan, Vietnam, Fiji, are facing quite significant outbreaks. Taiwan had 700 cases yesterday [*Inaudible*]. Are we just as vulnerable to that sort of large outbreak, or is there something that is different about our approach that makes it less likely?

**PM:** So the first thing I'd say is that every country is vulnerable. It's all about the mechanisms that you have in place, and even then having ongoing filters in order to deal with any potential penetration through some of those safeguards. So that's the system we've been operating. I do, of course, look at other countries and their experience, particularly when they've had a similar strategy, to make sure that we're learning those lessons. From what I've read of what's happened in Taiwan—and, again, I'm relying on reporting, so I can't be 100 percent clear that this is exactly what's happened—they started to take a different approach with flight crew. They were housed in a hotel that was also used for domestic tourism and there was intermingling between domestic tourists and flight crew within that facility, and that has then—in addition to that, there's been Lions clubs meeting in karaoke, and the rest is history. So I look to all of that, and take that as just guidance for us in terms of how we manage on an ongoing basis—even with the roll-out of vaccine, even with testing—how we continue to keep our guard up and not let any vulnerabilities emerge.

**Media:** They're having hundreds of cases a day now in Taiwan and have not yet locked down. Are we being less—more willing to use lockdowns at a certain [*Inaudible*]?

**PM:** Well, we have been willing to do that, but we've always been willing to do that in a way that Taiwan has tended not to. So that hasn't been part of their strategy. They moved very quickly on borders, they had particular techniques that they used around contact tracing and technological solutions they used there, and they had a different way of using MIQ, if I

recall, as well. So they have had a similar goal to us, but they've got there through a similar path. It's not for me to tell any other country how they choose to operate their system—we're all learning as we go—but I certainly look to other countries and try and learn from them.

**Media:** On the question of the Royal family's role in New Zealand, do you think that New Zealand will become a republic in your political lifetime, or your actual lifetime?

**PM:** Thank you for acknowledging that those are two different things. I believe in my lifetime. I've been very clear that, despite being a republican, I'm not of the view that in the here and now, in my term of office, that this is something that New Zealanders feel particularly strongly about. I don't know that I've had one person actually raise with me, generally, day to day, the issue of becoming a republic. So I've prioritised, and this Government has prioritised, those issues that we do see as a priority, but I do still think that there will be a time and a place; I just don't see it as now.

**Media:** Isn't it relevant to the conversation that we are having about partnership with Māori, though, and re-examining the way that our country [*Inaudible*]

**PM:** Yes, it is. Yes, it is, but I still think, actually, if you think about some of the conversations we're having there, they're at their most basic: how do we make sure that Māori are able to access decent healthcare and have as long a life expectancy as Europeans in New Zealand? How do we ensure that we have the same level of homeownership? Those are the questions that really vex New Zealanders that I hear. I haven't heard them then moving to the conversation of becoming a republic.

**Media:** When was that call first made?

**PM:** Last week, but there are—I wouldn't want to give the impression there's ongoing dialogue that happens between the Queen's private secretary and the Cabinet Office between times. Great, thanks, everyone.

**conclusion of press conference**