

POST-CABINET PRESS CONFERENCE: TUESDAY, 28 JANUARY 2020

PM: Tēnā koe tēnei ahiahi. Good afternoon. Welcome, everyone. Today I will outline the rest of my week ahead and make an announcement, before handing over to the Minister of Health, Dr David Clark, and Ministry of Health's director-general, Ashley Bloomfield, also a public health specialist, to give an update on New Zealand's response to the coronavirus.

First of all, though, tomorrow in Auckland I will join the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister Robertson, Minister Shaw, Minister Twyford, Minister Jones, and Minister Woods, to outline the Government's \$12 billion infrastructure upgrade of New Zealand's roads, rail, schools, and hospitals, to futureproof our country and our economy.

That evening, I will help to unveil a digital artwork at Aotea Centre. On Thursday, I will address a Business New Zealand lunchtime audience at SkyCity, and over the weekend I will be travelling to Waitangi for a series of events and announcements.

As you'll know, last week, I announced as Labour leader our intention to deliver a positive, factual, and a robust election campaign. The Labour Party signed up to Facebook's new advertising transparency rules, and will have its major new election policy costings independently verified. I stand by these actions as Prime Minister and as the leader of the New Zealand Labour Party. New Zealanders deserve freedom from misinformation and some of the negative style of campaigning that we have seen take place overseas in the past.

That is not to say that we won't be taking full part in debating and challenging policies and positions, but in the lead up to this year's election, I believe it's incumbent on us to deliver for New Zealanders the campaign that they deserve and that they expect—a contest of ideas for the future, and one that is befitting of the New Zealand style of campaign and our values.

In recent elections, it has become more common to see Prime Ministers announce election dates well beforehand. It's always been my personal view that this is best practice. It's fair, and it allows our Electoral Commission to prepare. For politicians, I expect a three-year terms means we're all constantly in campaign mode anyway. As for us as a Government, this year we intend to govern right up until the election is held, which today, I can advise, will be on 19 September.

This election, I will be asking New Zealanders to continue to support my leadership and the current direction of the Government, which is grounded in stability, a strong economy, and progress on the long-term challenges facing New Zealand. We are running an established and effective MMP Government and overseeing a strong economy with low unemployment and growth rates that others look to with envy, outstripping countries we often compare ourselves to, like Australia and the UK, while making critical investments in health and education and reducing child poverty.

We have made good progress, and we will be asking for a further term to keep getting the job done. Till then, we will be continuing on with our agenda. You'll see a significant set of announcements in the next two weeks alone.

Shortly, I am going to hand over—I understand there are likely to be questions around the election date, and I can assure you that I will be answering those shortly. I also expect there be interest in the response and ongoing response by New Zealand public health officials to coronavirus. I'm going to make just some introductory comments, then I'll hand over to Minister Clark and then to Dr Ashley Bloomfield.

I want to start by providing an update on New Zealand citizens in Hubei province. MFAT is continuing to monitor the situation closely and updated its China travel advisory, as you would expect, to do not travel to Hubei province. There are now 53 New Zealanders registered as being in Wuhan city on SafeTravel. This includes New Zealand citizens as well as their

dependents, some of whom are New Zealand citizens, some are New Zealand permanent residents, and some are citizens of other countries. Around 20 of these people have contacted us seeking consular assistance, and I understand from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade that of those 20 people, MFAT has had contact with them all. MFAT is not aware at this point of any New Zealanders in Wuhan showing flu-like symptoms.

No decision has yet been taken, as we understand, by Australia, the UK, or Canada—our consular partners—to deploy charter or deploy military assets at this stage to evacuate their citizens. We are, however, staying in very close touch with those partners—I'd say especially with Australia. Minister Clark is in frequent contact with his counterpart, and I intend and will be seeking to speak sometime shortly with PM Morrison.

The Department of State is making arrangements to relocate its personnel stationed at the US Consulate General in Wuhan to the United States. Again, I think it is important to reiterate New Zealand has no officials in Wuhan, whereas the United States does.

For an assisted departure, many issues need to be worked through logistically with the Chinese authorities and with our partners, including the tight travel restrictions imposed by the Chinese Government on people leaving the province, pre-departure screening requirements, any quarantine measures needed for those evacuated, and what assets would be needed to undertake an evacuation. I think it is important to add that in a briefing for embassies in Beijing by the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs yesterday, Chinese officials made it clear that it will be very difficult to get foreign nationals out of Hubei province even if they are healthy. As I say, though, though to date no one has, we are keeping in very close contact with our consular partners.

I'd now like to ask both Dr David Clark and Dr Ashley Bloomfield to join me. I'll ask Dr Clark to speak first and then hand over to Dr Bloomfield.

Hon Dr David Clark: Thank you, Prime Minister. You will all know that yesterday, public health staff began meeting flights from China in Christchurch and in Auckland, looking for signs of the novel coronavirus and providing information where necessary and reassurance to passengers. Yesterday, they met five flights in Auckland and one flight in Christchurch. In Auckland there were 1,262 passengers, and in Christchurch 288 passengers. None of the passengers identified with any of the symptoms and none required medical treatment. None the less, we make no apology for being proactive at the border.

We're doing what we can to make sure that we don't have coronavirus spread in New Zealand. There is of course a chance that it will arrive here. There are over 50 cases where coronavirus has arrived in other countries around the world, although it must be noted that there is only one case recorded so far of human to human transmission outside of mainland China. The assessment is that there's a low likelihood of a sustained community outbreak in New Zealand if any cases arrived here. Despite having no cases, of course we will remain vigilant, and I've asked that the director-general arrange daily communications on the outbreak, and he will say a little more about that. The important thing for us is that if a case does show up here, we are prepared—and we are prepared.

I do want to acknowledge the work of many Government organisations in responding to the coronavirus. They have been kept busy responding from 6 January—just a very short period after the virus was first identified to the WHO, on 31 December. As of today, the National Health Coordination Centre at the Ministry of Health has been activated to coordinate the response to the novel coronavirus. The Director-General of Health will speak in more detail about that shortly.

This morning, Cabinet authorised an infectious and notifiable diseases order, and the Executive Council has already passed that through its system so that it comes into effect on 30 January, just two days away. The order will put novel coronavirus on Part 1 of Schedule 1 of the Health Act and make it a notifiable disease, and that means that health practitioners and laboratories are required to notify medical officers of health in cases of the disease. And the medical officers of health then have powers under Part 3A of the Health Act to manage the disease, including the ability to formally initiate contact tracing of contacts of cases of

coronavirus. They can issue mandatory directions such as restricting movement and travel. They can apply for court orders such as for treatment, and they can issue administrative 72-hour detention orders, otherwise known as urgent public health orders, if required.

Now, of course, we don't have any cases here, and actually the pathways have already been established for people to notify if they have any concerns. But this formalises it, and, again, we think it's appropriate to take a cautious approach and be ready, should any cases show up in New Zealand.

It's important to us that information about the virus is factual. At this stage, we know the virus could show up in New Zealand, but the likelihood of a case transmitting to another person in New Zealand is considered low to moderate. The preparedness, therefore, focuses on social isolation for anyone who is at risk, and focusing on hand washing, cough etiquette, and seeking the appropriate medical support. Healthline stands at the ready with translation.

Making coronavirus a notifiable disease means we continue to manage the response appropriately, and formally increase activity as required. It's useful to point out that in the past, we have very rarely used the powers that are associated with that step. Generally, people do follow advice, and we ask members of the public to continue to cooperate with medical staff, and we have evidence that that's happening.

The other thing that's happened overnight is that information has gone out to the education sector so that schools are being asked to request that students arriving from mainland China go into a voluntary arrangement of isolation for two weeks before coming to schools. Again, Director-General Ashley Bloomfield can speak to that in greater detail, but also information is being provided to them on, again, the same kinds of things you would do around the flu—good hand hygiene, cough etiquette, and how to seek medical support. So I'll hand over to the Director-General of Health and then back to the Prime Minister for questions.

Dr Ashley Bloomfield: Thank you, Minister. Kia ora koutou katoa. Just to build on what the health Minister has already said, we have been actively working on this situation since 6 January. We've a number of streams of activity that have been under way. These have included regular communications with the health sector via national health advisories. We have a very formal mechanism for doing that. We have activated our inter-agency pandemic group, and that met last Friday, as did the cross-agency border group, and that met again yesterday.

We yesterday had a meeting of a cross-agency watch group, which is the first step should we need to escalate things up to an ODESC level. We haven't needed to do that as yet. Most importantly here, we've provided very clear guidance to practitioners and public health units around the country about what to do if they have a suspected case.

We are clearly monitoring the international situation very closely. As you will be aware, there is a surfeit of information available, and we are working closely with WHO and very closely with Australia, and all our measures have been very much in step with those of Australia.

And as the Minister mentioned, today we've just formalised what has been an incident management team that's been in place for a week. We've now formalised that by just activating our National Health Coordination Centre. This, effectively, is a bespoke room that's in the basement of the ministry. It's set up at all times. We had the NHCC activated during our management of the measles outbreak last year, and we now have the team and people who are trained from across the ministry located there to support the sector in responding.

The Minister's mentioned the risk, as we assess it at the moment, of a sustained community outbreak in New Zealand is low, even if we do get a case here, and as he's reiterated, there has only been one case of person-to-person transmission outside of China. Around 98 percent of cases so far are in China, and you will have seen the very widespread measures that China has implemented to help prevent the spread, both within China and internationally, and that will very much help manage the international spread of this disease.

A comment on testing. You'll be aware that at the moment, we are sending any tests that are being ordered across to Melbourne, to the laboratory there, and we can get results back

within 24 to 36 hours. Our own ESR is currently putting in place the testing arrangements, and we will be able to do that testing onshore here later in the week.

I sought advice from my team about just reflecting back to 2002-3 when we had the SARS outbreak. In fact, at that time, New Zealand only ever had one case of SARS. That person was treated and recovered, and so we have very well-honed systems. That was some time ago, and we have two things that are very different this time around. First of all, there's been very early and widespread information provided by the Chinese authorities and measures implemented, and the second thing is that China was able to isolate and identify this virus very early on so that testing could be developed and is now available around the globe. That is very different from the SARS situation. Likewise, we have experience from the swine flu pandemic in 2009, a very well-developed pandemic influenza plan, which is completely applicable to this situation because it's a respiratory virus as well. So we're well placed to be well prepared and to escalate any further measures, should that be needed.

And, finally, I know there's quite a lot of interest in the Chinese New Year celebrations. At this stage, we're developing health advice for local government organisations, for people who may be attending those events or, indeed, holding them. Our advice remains the same: that anyone who is feeling unwell shouldn't attend those events, and especially if they are unwell and have travelled from China, particularly Hubei province, and the measures remain the same. The most effective way to stop transmission of this virus is the same as with influenza and with other respiratory infections: excellent hand hygiene, good cough hygiene and etiquette, and, of course, social isolation. Thank you very much.

Media: Based on what you were saying, Dr Bloomfield—and without undermining, of course, the loss of life—do you agree with people like Lance O'Sullivan, who are saying that this has been over-hyped?

Dr Ashley Bloomfield: One of the things is that there is a lot of information floating around on social media. What we've been trying to do with our messaging right through this is be very clear and consistent, and I think you've heard the Minister use the phrase "We're alert but not alarmed." So I think our messaging has been very consistent. I think our actions have been proportionate, they've been planned, and, as I said earlier, they have been very much in step with what Australia is doing.

Media: Yesterday, you said it was likely that New Zealand would get a case. Can you provide us with a bit of a time line or your best estimates as to when it might arrive in New Zealand shores?

Dr Ashley Bloomfield: It's impossible for us to say that. What I can say, though, is, of course, that since these cases have been diagnosed in a number of other countries, China has implemented even more stringent exit measures at its own border. We know that, for example, they have stopped Chinese tour parties travelling outside of China. So I think these measures that China is putting in place as border exit measures will greatly enhance the ability of the international community to get on top of this.

Media: Prime Minister, has New Zealand been too slow in talking about evacuating? Because the US has got citizens out. Was an opportunity at the outset missed?

PM: No, I don't believe they have. My understanding, although, as I've articulated, is that there is an intent there for the United States—they've done work because they have personnel, they have Government workers, on the ground in the province; we do not. Of course, though, as I've just mentioned, we do have permanent residents and citizens, but the Chinese officials have made it very clear to us that it will be very difficult for us to extract anyone from the province because of the measures that they have put in place. Having said that, we are staying in close contact with others—Canada, Australia, who, as I say, have citizens as well—around their plans, and we are talking closely with them around any plans or intent there. But it is a very difficult situation.

Media: Is it your understanding there'll be no evacuations of citizens under a Government-to-Government arrangement?

PM: So to date, but, as I've said, there is an intent with the United States, so that may well be happening or happen soon. Again, they have personnel; they have Government workers. That is not to trivialise, though, the fact that we may not have Government workers, but we have people, and so, as I've said, MFAT has had contact with, roughly, in the order of 20 of those. There are a number more who have told us that they are in the area—they could be visiting family and friends and the like—but at this stage, evacuating them is not a simple, straightforward exercise, but we are continuing those conversations with other partners around future plans.

Media: Has the embassy been open in Beijing?

PM: I'm happy to clarify that.

Media: We talked to someone who was told it was closed for Chinese New Year when they rang the embassy and couldn't get hold of anyone.

PM: I'm told that there are staff at the embassy, as you would expect, given the nature of what is happening in China at present. The physical doors to the embassy were not open, having general members of the public come in, as it is currently a public holiday, but there are people there. Those calls that come through, they are triaged and there will be, often, information around how to speak to someone 24/7, even if it's after hours.

Media: So we just rang and got a message that it was closed. There was no one answering, and we were put to an emergency—

PM: Yes, and that would go—

Media: [*Inaudible*] register for SafeTravel.

PM: My understanding—as I've been advised by MFAT—is there are people in our embassy and that people should be able always to speak to a human, with a 24-hour/7 contact number. So I would be happy to pick up the case that you've relayed or even the experience you've had, because that is counter to the advice I'm getting from MFAT.

Media: Are Kiwis in Wuhan braced for the possibility that they won't be evacuated?

PM: As I've said, we're keeping up those conversations with our partners. We're looking at the situation on the ground. I have, however, just been really open and communicated to you exactly what has been communicated to all countries via Beijing, who have sat down with embassies and said—again, as I've stated—that it will be very difficult to get foreign nationals out of the province, even if they are healthy. That's not to say that we aren't continuing those conversations and looking at the possibilities there.

Media: What advice have we been giving the people who are stuck there?

PM: Passing on key medical advice, obviously; also answering any questions that they may have around the current status of evacuations and so on—just providing as much information as possible. Some questions include things like where they might be able to access face masks and things like that within the province.

Media: [*Inaudible*]

PM: I'll just come around—sure. I'll just stick with the questions relating to coronavirus, if I may, and then we can move on.

Media: Have you had any briefings from Treasury about the potential economic impact of the virus, given that tourism—it has been said it's going to be taking a bit of a hit?

PM: I have not received any briefings at this stage. I have sought from the Minister of Tourism to provide additional information from their perspective around what they're seeing, experiencing, and what their predictions may be. The feedback I've had today—and, again, this is, as I understand, nothing that's been provided in an official briefing. But there is a bit of a view that this may simply cause waylaid travel—so, potentially, travel that may just happen at a different point in the calendar year. But, again, it is very early. It's early days, and so I wouldn't want to be too definitive around that at this point. Again, as Dr Bloomfield

has said, China has taken very restrictive measures around people's movements. That is, of course, to contain the virus, and that's to the benefit of everyone, but that will have a knock-on effect.

Media: Given New Zealand doesn't have any consular staff in Wuhan, what plans are in place, for example, if there are citizens who are running out of food or are facing those sort of logistical difficulties?

PM: Yes, and of course, with the restrictions that have been put in by Chinese officials, to a certain degree there's that expectation that making sure that provisions are available for their citizens as well as others who are within the province continue to be maintained. We are having conversations around if, indeed, being able to access people—how we might go about that, how that might be possible, given that there are restrictions, obviously, around going into the area, and, again, this is where those conversations with our counterparts is also helpful. It's really the kind of questions that we're all trying to answer together and work through.

Media: Have you had assurances from Chinese authorities that they'd be willing to help out citizens from other countries as well as their own in these sort of situations where nations can't be [*Inaudible*]

PM: Well, look, as you would expect, you'd expect no distinction in the treatment that people receive in terms of availability of foodstuffs. It's in everyone's interests to make sure that those who are currently in a situation where they cannot leave are able to access basic provisions that they need while they're there, and that's an area where you'd expect no distinction between people who are Chinese nationals and others.

Media: Are you hopeful that if Australia is eventually granted permission to evacuate its citizens, that perhaps New Zealand would be able to tag on and use their aircraft, or would New Zealand be in a position to send its own aircraft?

PM: Look, again, without giving—that's PM Morrison just dialling in as we speak. Without really wanting to get ahead of the logistics here, obviously this is the kind of area where you'd see—

Media: Is it the kind of conversation you'd have with PM Morrison?

PM: —it would just make sense. Well, we're in close contact over this situation—just the work that we're doing on the ground, the situation of our citizens and residents, and making sure that we just keep up those conversations and work together. So that's what you'd expect and that's exactly what we're doing.

Media: There are reports that pharmacies in New Zealand are selling out of facemasks. Have you had any reports on that, or is there anything the Government can do to try and bring in extra supplies?

PM: Yeah, look, here I think, again, it's just important to reiterate—rather than a response to that, actually reiterate—the health message, which is, obviously, evidence-based. So I'll hand over to Dr Bloomfield for that.

Dr Ashley Bloomfield: Sure. We've had some reports on that, and what I can say is that the ministry has a sole contract with a local North Island producer in Whanganui to produce both surgical masks and the so-called P2 mask, which is more fitting on the face, and to be able to ramp up production of those and distribute out to district health boards for use as part of the response. I just want to reiterate the message, and some of you may have heard the interview that Kim Hill did with virologist Chris Smith from Cambridge University. He was very clear on this. You can use a facemask if you like, but it is not really any protection. The staples of preventing infection are the ones that are there for influenza and other respiratory viruses: frequent hand washing, social isolation, and good cough and sneeze etiquette.

PM: OK, any other questions on coronavirus? No? OK, then feel free.

Media: Was the situation at Ihumātao discussed at Cabinet today?

PM: You're not even going to start with an election question?

Media: [*Inaudible*]

PM: Thank you. I'd like to start with Tova today.

Media: That's novel.

PM: Just as something new.

Media: How much of a factor do the All Blacks play in the decision making around the election date?

PM: I'm not going to give one single factor as being the overriding rationale. There are a number of things to take into consideration, and this is one area where it's a decision, essentially, for me. The things that were really important, essentially, are people's ability to vote: so, school holidays, whether or not there are public holidays, and, of course, whether or not there might be anything else that will be taking their mind on to other things—so, for instance, important sporting fixtures.

Media: Are you anticipating a presidential-style campaign between you versus Simon Bridges?

PM: Ultimately, I'm going to be campaigning on my record and this Government's record: that we've made good progress but we have more to do. I think, actually, over the last several campaigns, yes there has tended to be a focus on the leader of the two major parties, but, equally, I'll be standing on a record I'm proud of too.

Media: Is it a given that you'll be keeping New Zealand First and Greens open as potential coalition or confidence and supply partners?

PM: Well, obviously we've demonstrated through this current parliamentary term, which we will continue governing for until 19 September, the ability for us to work constructively together and to form a stable Government together. So that's proof now that voters have of our ability to do that. It's up to them then how they choose to vote.

Media: Any one you prefer to work with rather than the other?

PM: Again, I've never done that in the past and I won't do that in the future. My job as Labour leader will be to campaign for the highest possible vote for the Labour Party as possible.

Media: Just backtracking to Rātana last week, Cabinet Minister Shane Jones made some comments about Pania Newton which some women and people are describing as being chauvinistic and undermining the mana of women. What would you say to that?

PM: Again, you will have seen I don't get into a habit of critiquing other members of Parliament language. I'd suggest you put that question to Shane Jones directly.

Media: Are you making an announcement at Waitangi about Ihumātao?

PM: I haven't given a date for when working through a possible solution will be concluded other than we are working incredibly hard on finding a resolution here, one that works for—one that works, ultimately, and acknowledges that it's currently held in private ownership by Fletcher's, one that mana whenua are involved in, and one that, ultimately, works for all New Zealand and future generations. But we are working very, very hard.

Media: Was it discussed at Cabinet at all today?

PM: We have a discussion on a range of items. I've got no announcements to make on Ihumātao today. One thing I will say is nothing's been rejected by Cabinet. These are ongoing conversations.

Media: But was the paper taken to Cabinet?

PM: Again, as I say, there's no announcements to be made today. Nothing's been rejected or decided by Cabinet. And I'm saying that in terms of some of the speculation I've seen flowing around their decision making.

Media: I'm not asking about announcements; I'm asking about if it was discussed at Cabinet.

PM: And as you'll know, I'm not one to give away every single agenda item or topic of discussion for Cabinet.

Media: Given that there are two referendum questions alongside the election this year, in two very polarising issues, do you think there's a risk that voters will feel inundated?

PM: No, certainly not. You're asking me: do I think that New Zealanders can handle a situation where they're voting on who will govern the country but also two subject matters that have been debated in New Zealand for years. I absolutely believe that New Zealanders will have no problem with that.

Media: Could they help boost voter turnout?

PM: Only time will tell. Ultimately, these are questions that Parliament and the Government is determined we should put to the people. And I think that there will be issues where, actually, we should just go straight and ask the opinion of New Zealanders.

Media: Did you intentionally go with International Talk Like a Pirate Day?

PM: Ha, ha! As I said, many, many factors in my thinking. I did not know that that was. That's another interesting tidbit to add to the list.

Media: Women's Suffrage Day—was that a part of it?

PM: No. Look, as I say, the factors, ultimately, for me were: is there anything that is going to get in the way of New Zealanders participating in this election? And, also, very important to me, to demonstrate of course that we have fulfilled the expectations of running to that three-year term, this is within several days of the election that we had three years ago, which was also held around this time in September?

Media: Were you aware that it's Tamati Coffey's birthday as well?

PM: No, I was not. Obviously, that was something I'm not sure he would have lobbied in favour or against.

Media: Have you come to a decision yet about whether the Māori MPs who are currently in Māori seats will run on the list?

PM: Yeah. We don't have any announcements in that regard to make.

Media: Just about Whānau Ora, are you looking forward to having the discussion with the Māori leaders and finding a solution there?

PM: Yes. I am. I think a face-to-face conversation can only be helpful, and as I said at Rātana, I think there's much that we agree on. We agree on the success and the benefit that Whānau Ora's providing for whānau, and we've seen that, and so that's a great starting point for us to have the conversation.

Media: It's a long lead-in to the election. I think it's 235 sleeps. When can we expect the disentanglement—

PM: I haven't started counting. Clearly you have!

Media: —disentanglement from Government policies to Labour, New Zealand First, Greens policies, and how will Kiwis understand [*Inaudible*]

PM: As I've said, we will be governing as a Government until the election. That is our duty. That is our role.

Media: What do you think the big issues will be for voters at this election?

PM: You know, the major challenges facing New Zealand. Of course, we have inherited significant challenges around our infrastructure. When we took office, there were issues at Middlemore that were significant—mouldy walls. We've had to get on with fixing those issues, and we've made good progress. I'll be seeking the support of New Zealanders to keep going, to get the job done.

Media: Hundreds of Kiwis in Australia are considering taking a class action lawsuit to challenge laws that prevent New Zealanders becoming residents and citizens. Should Kiwis automatically have the right to residency, like Australians do?

PM: This is, obviously, something that has been an ongoing part of discussions between New Zealand and Australia for a number of years, and we'll continue to do so. My job is to advocate for New Zealanders who may have chosen to make their home in Australia, and I will keep doing that.

Media: They argue that it's discrimination against New Zealanders. Do you agree with that?

PM: Well, we've argued a fairness case, particularly given that New Zealanders make a huge contribution as taxpayers in Australia, and given the rights that Australians have here. So we've made an argument on fairness grounds and we'll continue to do so.

Media: Do you think it's discriminatory?

PM: Yeah, again, for me fairness is—you know, that's an argument enough as well.

Media: What do you think the odds are of you still being the Prime Minister come October?

PM: Good.

Media: What do you make of Simon Bridges raising the possibility of anti-semitism as the reason that there's no person attending the International Holocaust Remembrance Day event in Israel?

PM: Wrong. Any last one? We'll make this the last question.

Media: Have you had any reports of imports or exports being affected because of the coronavirus?

PM: I haven't had any reports on that to date—so nothing that's come through from MPI. Certainly, keeping in mind that the WHO has been very clear, that they have advised to date that there, in their view, should not be travel or indeed trade restrictions around China at this point, but again I've had nothing to suggest that's been an issue to date. All right. I'll take a last one—Tova. Let's round it out.

Media: Are you concerned about the potential of reinvigorating the same coalition if the National Party tried to freeze out New Zealand First in the election campaign by ruling them out and trying to suffocate them during the election?

PM: If you're asking me whether or not I have concerns about our ability to campaign hard, to campaign strong, to win the support of New Zealanders, and to form another Government, I have every confidence that we can do it and that we will do it. All right. Thanks, everyone.

conclusion of press conference