

**PRIME MINISTER AND DIRECTOR-GENERAL OF HEALTH PRESS CONFERENCE:  
TUESDAY, 5 MAY 2020**

**PM:** Kia ora koutou katoa. Before we begin, I'll take the usual practice of handing over to Dr Bloomfield first, to give us all an update on today's numbers.

**Dr Ashley Bloomfield:** Thank you, Prime Minister. Tēnā koutou katoa. Today, we have no new cases of COVID-19 to report. In addition, one case that was previously categorised as a probable case has been changed, and is now defined as not a case. So our overall total of confirmed and probable cases decreases by one to 1,486. Our total number of confirmed cases therefore remains at 1,137, and we will continue to report this number to the World Health Organisation, as we do update them each day.

Yesterday, there were 3,232 tests processed at our laboratories around the country and the combined total to date is 155,928 tests. Of our cases, 1,302 are reported as recovered, which represents a total of 88 percent of our confirmed and probable cases. Today, there are four people in hospital and none of these is in ICU. There are no additional deaths to report.

We still have the 16 significant clusters around New Zealand, with three now closed, as I've previously reported. One existing cluster—this is the St Margaret's Hospital and Rest Home—has today had five new cases linked to it. It's important to note these are not new cases; rather, what has happened is following further investigation, cases from what was previously considered a separate, smaller cluster have been linked to the St Margaret's cluster, and those have been merged. These are existing cases, and none of them are patients at Waitakere Hospital.

Obviously, having zero new cases of COVID-19 to report for a second day in a row is very encouraging, and all New Zealanders should feel pleased with their efforts—I certainly do—and of what we have achieved together over these last weeks. Of course, we must stick to the plan. The worst thing we could do now is celebrate success early before the full-time whistle blows, and jeopardise the gains we have made. Stay the course, stay in your bubble, and don't squander what we have achieved by giving the virus a chance that it will only too readily accept if we do that.

I just want to talk a bit about exemptions. We require anyone entering the country, as you know, to go into a 14-day period of either quarantine or managed isolation—the former if they are symptomatic. To date, since 20 March, around 6,000 returned travellers to New Zealand have gone into managed isolation or quarantine, and there are currently 179 people in quarantine facilities and just under 2,800 people in managed isolation.

These precautions are obviously to prevent the virus coming into our country and to ensure that all New Zealanders are protected. There is, of course, a process for requesting an exemption, including on compassionate grounds, and the ministry has to date received 24 such requests that relate to a dying relative. As you know, there has been a judicial review of one of those requests which last Friday resulted in the court intervening, and a personal visit was organised.

As a result of that judicial review, I've asked our team to review previous similar requests to ensure that they followed the correct process and take into account the judge's findings. I should also point out that it won't be the same team doing that review of those cases, but they are being done by a separate team that is in the National Crisis Management Centre, which considers all those requests for exemption for domestic travel. So they are being done by an entirely separate group of people. The review started today. I have asked for it to be completed as soon as possible this week.

Today is International Midwives' Day, and I want to shout out to all the midwives who work in Aotearoa New Zealand as both lead maternity carers in the community and our core

midwives in hospitals and our primary birthing units. Ngā mihi nui ki a koutou. There are about 3,200 of these essential front-line workers and they undertake important work across our communities. And during the period of lockdown, around 6,000 babies were delivered; many, if not all, with the help of those midwives. So once again, I want to acknowledge the wonderful work they do, not just today but each day.

Today is also World Hand Hygiene Day. Now, that's very apposite at this time, but I also should point out that every day at the moment should be World Hand Hygiene Day, and it's a very important reminder today of the importance of what is a very simple action that prevents passing on any infection but, in particular, at the moment, greatly reduces the risk of passing on the COVID-19 infection. And, fittingly this year, the campaign theme is "SAVE LIVES: Clean Your Hands". Prime Minister, I'm happy to leave it there and hand back to you.

**PM:** Thank you very much, Dr Bloomfield. Can I reiterate your thanks to those who are our midwives in our communities. And it is in times like this that we acknowledge the role that they play for many mums to be within their community and within their whānau, and they always go above and beyond. I just want to acknowledge that—and also, of course, world hand washing day as well.

Achieving zero cases two days in a row is the result of New Zealanders demonstrating a level of commitment and discipline to our goal of winning the fight against COVID-19. That we can all be undeniably proud of. It points to our lockdown doing exactly what we'd planned it to do: break the chain of transmission. However, we know the virus can have a long tail, and that other cases can pop up; so, as we make our way through this week and head towards the level 3 review next week, my message remains: don't do anything that snatches our potential victory at this point.

One case at one gathering has led to multiple clusters, and the virus getting away on us can still happen. So my message remains the same for the remainder of the week: stay home, stay in your bubble, maintain physical distancing, and let's double down this week to maintain this good run of numbers. I'm also mindful that I have seen positive numbers in other places before and it's not always sustained; so we do need to still be cautious.

Before I come to Australia, I want to give you a quick update on the progress of the support and assistance for businesses and their workers hit by COVID-19. This afternoon, the COVID-19 Response (Further Management Measures) Legislation Bill will have its first reading in Parliament. It gives effect to a range of measures the Government has put in place to support businesses through the pandemic, including helping businesses facing insolvency to remain viable by hibernating existing debt until they can trade normally again; changes to the parental leave scheme to allow essential workers to return to work without being disadvantaged by losing entitlements to certain leave and payments; and changes that will allow the likes of the Heart Foundation and Coastguard and particularly the Countdown Kids Charitable Trust to process their fund-raising lotteries through email, phone, and electronic payments.

These are just some of the inadvertent consequences of this extraordinary time we're in and the resolution that we're finding for those problems. The first reading of the bill will take place this afternoon. It will be referred to the Epidemic Response Committee for consideration and reported back to the House on Tuesday, 12 May. It will then move through the remaining legislative stages as quickly as possible.

I've just come from a meeting of the Australian National Cabinet, a gathering of Australia's state and federal leaders, to discuss our experience with COVID-19 on both sides of the Ditch, what we can learn from one another, and how we might be able to work together as we recover from this pandemic. The National Cabinet tends to meet in times of national crisis but, obviously, is infrequent—the last New Zealand Prime Minister to participate in such a meeting was Peter Fraser, who attended various meetings of Australia's War Cabinet. Australians and New Zealanders travel across the Ditch more than they do anywhere else. New Zealand is Australia's second-largest source of tourists after China,

with 1.2 million visitors last year, and 1.6 million Aussies visited us. So we both stand to benefit from getting travel up and running again. Part of the reason for so much travel is that families and friendships, of course, span the Tasman. There are around 75,000 Australians in New Zealand, and more than half a million Kiwis in Australia. We're also Australia's largest export market by number of exporting firms—18,500 Aussie businesses trade with New Zealand, meaning we're especially critical for Australian SMEs. So the case for increasing economic relations when safe is clear.

I joined the meeting at the very, very beginning and, I should note, it is still under way, and so you'll forgive me for not saying too much here at this point. But it is our intention to issue a statement at the conclusion of the National Cabinet in order to provide you all with an update of some of the issues discussed, and some of the potential outcomes of that meeting.

But again, I would note such a discussion has only been possible as a result of the world-leading resolve from both sides of the Tasman to get the virus under control, and I do think that we should both be proud of the efforts that have been made and also, again, the demonstration of the important Anzac bond between us.

On to a bit of Kiwi ingenuity, I've outlined a few innovations today that are helping to get our economy moving. I want to reflect on one of those in particular, and that is our vital supply chain—our transport sector. New ways of working have ensured our food and goods have been unpacked from ships and aircraft, loaded into trucks, and delivered to retailers, as well as kept our exports flowing. At Wellington CentrePort, the teams eliminated face-to-face contact and physical paperwork and they've adopted digital kiosks, radio comms, automated weighbridges, and virtual planning meetings.

We've seen that same kind of adaptability in businesses up and down the country. Just one example is how two particular drivers, Greg and Sam, have willingly changed their hours of work and routines to match the different Interislander ferry timetables so they can continue to get frozen vegetables and chips from Ashburton to the ferries in Picton. I want to say thanks to Greg and Sam. Necessity breeds innovation and with social distancing and good hygiene likely of course to be with us for a long time to come, I wouldn't be surprised if we keep seeing innovation throughout our alert levels and across the country. Happy to take your questions.

**Media:** How would you characterise the enthusiasm for the trans-Tasman bubble from the Australian side and learning of course that New Zealand's had two days of zero cases in a row, Australia's had a couple of cases, largely built around one factory in Victoria, so it [*Inaudible*] how safe it might be.

**PM:** Well, look, I think the important message there is that it doesn't much, and that, I think, reinforces why we continue to share that message of "stay the course". We have seen across the Ditch very low numbers, and then it can only take one outbreak in one workplace or one environment for you then suddenly to have an uptick, and that is why it is so important we stick with our restrictions.

Look, the other takeaway for me—and I say this just generally, regardless—is actually there are a lot of similarities in the way that we have each tried to manage COVID and get on top of it and get back in control, and therefore there's the same goals for both of us. Neither of us want cases of COVID coming between our countries. Neither of us would want the burden of that. So I think regardless of our future path we'll be looking for ways to do it safely. That would be top of mind.

**Media:** Prime Minister, was there any pushback from any of the state leaders? Did any of them feel that this push for a trans-Tasman travel bubble is too ambitious? Because many Australian states still have their state borders closed.

**PM:** Yeah, and so, again, I do want to respect the fact that the National Cabinet is still meeting, and I do also want to respect the fact that we were meeting within in a Cabinet environment so that means, of course, you'll know that when I'm talking about Cabinet I'll

often speak in very general terms. But again, this is not to get ahead of a decision. There are, obviously, within Australia, still restrictions around domestic travel and those are, ultimately, issues for Australia. I think, simply, the position that I would take on behalf of New Zealand is that when we feel comfortable and confident that we both won't receive cases from Australia, but equally that we won't export them, then that will be the time to move.

**Media:** And can you just be clear on whether or not there would be a quarantine at either border?

**PM:** Oh, the whole purpose of us discussing the possibility of having a bubble of sorts between us—a safe zone of travel—would be so that you wouldn't have to have a quarantine attached. I think everyone would acknowledge that it would be prohibitive. People just wouldn't travel if they had to stay on either side in quarantine for a two-week period and have to do the same again when you return. But there is still a lot of work to be done before we can progress an idea like that, but it's obviously been floated because of the benefits that it would bring.

**Media:** Taking into account all of those things—that we'd need to ensure that we weren't further transmitting the virus—what kind of certainty or clarity can you give to New Zealanders in Australia who want to come home and see their families? When will they be able to do that?

**PM:** Of course, I'd say to New Zealanders in Australia you can come home but, of course, at the moment we are still requiring that quarantine to keep you safe and to keep your family safe. But we are also actively considering what the future looks like for us. I'm very keen, of course, as I've always said, that the advantage we have—getting back in control of the virus—has been to try and get back to some form of normality. International travel won't feel like that for some time, but if we can find a way to make it work with Australia, then that would give that sense of normality, if we can make it work.

**Media:** [*Inaudible*] under level 2?

**PM:** Oh, again, for really the alert level framework within New Zealand. Of course, for us it's actually more the criteria of what we're seeing on both sides of the Ditch with our cases, with our controls, and with our border management.

**Media:** Can you see a situation where we would have a trans-Tasman bubble but exclude one of the Australian states, for example?

**PM:** For me, it actually really comes down to a determination at a state and federal level by Australia. So that's less of—other than, of course, we would have some expectations of when travel resumes, or if we're able to establish this kind of bubble, making sure we were doing it safely for us. And so that would mean, if we were seeing a cluster of cases or growth in cases or outbreaks, that we would have to look at changing what we were doing and what we were receiving on our side. But, ultimately, I still see that as part of the arrangements that need to be made between the states and at a federal level.

**Media:** Are you able to give us any more clarity on time frame?

**PM:** No. No, I do want to let that meeting conclude, and, of course, at the moment what we're discussing here is a concept that's been floated for some time, but I do want to allow the meeting to at least draw to a conclusion before we go any further.

**Media:** Prime Minister, what is your view on how the applications for compassionate exemptions have been handled, given every single one has been declined for that particular circumstance?

**PM:** Yeah, look, I would anticipate that Dr Bloomfield probably has a similar view to me on this matter. The whole point of having the ability to apply for a compassionate exemption was so that we could assess the circumstances. There should be nothing automated about that. We should give genuine consideration for each of those applications,

because they would only have been made because of dire circumstances. Now, I absolutely appreciate the reason we put that in place was we didn't want double grief. We didn't want a situation where people entered into a risky situation for them and their families, but, equally, we wanted to give them a chance to ask, to see if there was a way it could be managed.

**Media:** Can you clarify the situation for people wanting to travel within New Zealand, rather than coming from overseas, and being in quarantine, and is that a lower threshold?

**PM:** Sorry, what was that?

**Media:** If people have a dying relative in another part of the country—

**PM:** Yes.

**Media:** —would there be a lower threshold for allowance to go—

**PM:** And that's some of the kinds of scenarios that, of course, then you would want considered when looking at some applications, as to the degree to which it can be conducted safely. You see the conditions for the person who made a case to the court were very, very specific about private residence, private travel. And so, really, the Ministry of Health are having to weigh up some quite complex situations and making sure they also weigh up keeping other New Zealanders safe as well.

**Media:** But are you happy with the criteria that have been applied? Obviously, criticism of the judgment—and maybe Dr Bloomfield can comment on this—about the way these applications have been handled? And, obviously, this is not a clock you can turn back.

**PM:** Yeah, look, obviously, the judgment, as I read it, was more about the process rather than the fact that the Ministry of Health wanted to be able to assess and use criteria to deem if something could be safe. But, ultimately, it is the right decision to go back and look at each of them again, and I am pleased that the Ministry of Health are doing that at the request of the Minister of Health. That is the right thing to do. You're right, though, these are incredibly difficult circumstances, and I can't imagine being in that situation. In fact, one of the things I have found the hardest about the lockdown we have been in is the loss of people's friends and their family at that time.

**Media:** But when you said yesterday that there were 18 exemptions, you said that does suggest there's been due consideration. So the fact that there haven't actually been 18 exemptions, and you were given dud advice and I recognise that—but the fact that there haven't been, does that suggest there wasn't due consideration?

**PM:** That upholds the decision that has been made to go back and look at each of those cases. Decisions shouldn't be made in an automated way; they should be given due consideration. Every individual case should be considered, because these are people's lives.

**Media:** But how can you reconcile that when in the time that you need to do this review, and perhaps you can comment on that as well, Dr Bloomfield, in the time that you do this review and the time that those applications were made and declined, family members are dying?

**Dr Ashley Bloomfield:** So a couple of comments there. First of all, as I said, I've asked the team to do this as rapidly as possible, and I had a briefing from them this morning about the process, first of all to ensure it's done independently and, secondly, to make sure it is done expeditiously, and I recognise the time imperative here. So they are on to that immediately.

The second thing is, and this goes to the earlier question about the criteria and the process—and I had, in fact, already asked the team over a week ago, before this case came through, to relook at the process and the criteria as we move down alert levels and as we were able to better manage the risk of people coming into the country, and they had that process under way. They are now also looking at the judgment from last Friday to ensure

that the findings of the judge are actually informing the review of the process and criteria too.

**Media:** Would that review include the ability, if it's still relevant for people, for them to be able to then go and see a relative that they have previously had declined, even under appeal?

**Dr Ashley Bloomfield:** Yes, definitely, and that's one of the key purposes of that review of every case, and they are prioritising the ones that are the most pressing in terms of the time frames.

**Media:** In terms of the time frame, are you aware of how many of those cases it's now too late—that person has now passed away?

**Dr Ashley Bloomfield:** No, I don't have any information about that at the moment.

**PM:** One thing, I think, just for context: these are devastating cases. The incredibly difficult judgment the Ministry of Health are making is that, from memory, we've had over 20 cases of people who have been in isolation, having come in from overseas, who have subsequently tested positive for COVID. So that is the really difficult position that those making those judgments are in, but it's absolutely right that we go back and check again that the right judgment has been applied.

**Media:** Related to this, so not from people who are in quarantine but just in general, compassionate grounds for being able to be with somebody who's in a hospital or the like—we've spoken to a woman who's had to go through a miscarriage in hospital alone during level 3. Is that fair?

**Dr Ashley Bloomfield:** Well, I can't comment on that particular case, but once again, there is a process for exemptions for travel, inter-regional travel, that is dealt with by the National Crisis Management Centre, and they've had many hundreds of applications and they have approved quite a number of those—I don't have the exact numbers.

**PM:** Are you just implying someone in a hospital was unable to have someone accompany them?

**Media:** A support person. And we're also hearing that DHBs have different policies, allowing different support people in with different patients for appointments. Why those discrepancies across the DHBs?

**Dr Ashley Bloomfield:** So I can just comment on the latter. We certainly have an updated visitor policy that applies to level 3, and that has been revised for level 2 as well. But a key part of that is an assessment by the person who is in charge of the ward or the environment where a patient is to make sure that they are able to balance up the potential benefits, of course, to the individual with any risk and how that risk can be managed, and it's very important that we enable whoever it is who's in charge of the care of the person to be able to apply that judgment within a framework that we've agreed nationally.

**Media:** Do you recognise how terrifying that is, though, to have to go through something like that anyway, but to have to go through it alone?

**PM:** Yes, and, obviously, that's something that we had an expectation, of course, that through the different levels, different judgments would be applied. It's a bit hard for us to comment on that without knowing the DHB, the facility, and the circumstances, but you will have heard Dr Bloomfield speak many times about trying to create a protocol that really does give that flexibility on the ground to those who know their wards and know their spaces well.

**Media:** Dr Bloomfield, can I just clarify about the—sorry, just coming back to an earlier question—threshold for moving around the country because of the risk that isn't there because of people arriving from overseas. Is it exactly the same criteria, or are they being allowed a bit more leniency if it's within New Zealand, given that that international risk isn't there?

**PM:** So you're saying someone who comes in from overseas—

**Media:** No, someone who's already in New Zealand—

**PM:** Ah, forgive me—and is moving around regionally.

**Media:** —and is just moving around regionally. Are they being applied in a different way because that overseas risk isn't present?

**Dr Ashley Bloomfield:** I don't know the detail of that, but I can absolutely get that information. What I can say is that process is run not by the Ministry of Health team, which oversees the process for people who have come in and are in quarantine or manage self-isolation; it is run by a team in the National Crisis Management Centre.

**PM:** From what I've seen, yes, because there we've had reunification of parents and children in a number of other circumstances, so very, very different circumstances. They have to be dealt with through regional transfers.

**Media:** And only through the application that people can apply, basically, for travel exemptions—that would be the process that applied to that one?

**PM:** Yes, that's my recollection.

**Media:** On the COVIDSafe app, did you discuss that at all with Australia today, and how likely is it that we'll be adopting the same app?

**PM:** Again, you'll forgive me for not getting into a huge amount of specificity, but actually, when it comes to that, most of my conversations have tended to be directly with PM Morrison because, of course, most of the design development is being dealt with at that level. So that's something that we've tended to discuss when we've had the opportunity one on one.

**Media:** Australian media reported yesterday that New Zealand would be adopting that app. Was that erroneous?

**PM:** Well, look, I guess you could—if I'm being generous—of course, I've always said we're looking at the Singapore app, which is what the Australia app is based on. So perhaps, if they're taking an assumption there, that therefore it makes it a direct link, but I'm probably being generous.

**Media:** I just have a question about Cabinet's decision to give Government departments a bit of a break from providing regulatory impact assessments until the end of August. Have any departments come forward and said, "Actually, we have the capability and we can do these statements and maybe we should do them anyway just for a matter of public record." Have they offered that?

**PM:** No one has put a ban on regulatory impact statements by any stretch. Of course, you will see—and it's not uncommon from time to time when the House is dealing with matters of urgency for regulatory impact statements to not be part of a bill when it's immediately tabled and debated. So, when you have shortened time frames, that's not unusual, but it is also not ideal. I would have to go and check whether or not any agency had expressed a view, but, as I say, we've certainly not said we don't want regulatory impact statements. We've simply acknowledged how difficult it is with the time frames we've been working to.

**Media:** Have any of those departments with the policies already announced—have any of them done, like Treasury for example, done statements and just said, "Here's the statement, anyway."—just kind of FYI?

**PM:** Look, I couldn't answer a question like that with confidence. Of course, a number of policy decisions have been made, but they're equally all part of proactive release as well. So all of that, in time, will be made available.

**Media:** Prime Minister?

**PM:** Oh, sorry, I thought you'd had a question. Go ahead. I'm just offering them willy-nilly now! Go ahead.

**Media:** The tourism industry, obviously, has been hit a lot harder than most when it comes to COVID-19. I was speaking to some Māori tourism businesses this morning. They said extending the wage subsidy deep into the winter months would help them ward off making more redundancies. Is that something that the Government will consider—extending that exclusively for industries like tourism, where the effects will be far, far longer?

**PM:** Yeah, as we've said, we're moving into a phase of really looking at what sector-by-sector support may need to look like, depending on the ongoing level of impact. There are certain industries that will be affected for some time, even when we get to some level of normality, just because, for instance, our borders are closed or there are restrictions still on mass gatherings. So we are looking at being more specific and more targeted in our support. At the same time, we also need to encourage innovation. COVID will be with us for some time as a globe, and so we do need adaptation amongst some of those different industries to cope with that new environment.

**Media:** What will the Government be doing, then, to help [*Inaudible*] speaking with the mayor this morning. Pre-COVID, 32 percent of the people in Rotorua were a part of the tourism workforce. That's a third of the workforce. What will you do to stop these cities becoming ghost towns?

**PM:** Two things, of course, is that domestic tourism is part our tourism infrastructure—for some more than others. So getting the virus under control puts us in a position down the track to be able to open that back up, and that's a win for that sector. But, secondly, we are thinking again around the longer-term role that we need to play to support some of those hardest-hit sectors.

**Media:** When will that decision come? Because a lot of businesses in those industries are saying that, with the wage subsidy ending in approximately four weeks, they're looking at pulling the trigger on redundancies now.

**PM:** Yeah, and, look, obviously, we are thinking about the time frames around when the wage subsidy phases out and what we look to do next for those hardest-hit sectors. At the same time, I do encourage those who are working in tourism to start making those assessments of how dependent their business is on overseas travel, because we will not have open borders for the rest of the world for a long time to come.

**Media:** But, even in retail and hospitality, those businesses—they're still going to be impacted. When can they get a sense of surety about what sort of support they might receive?

**PM:** Of course, at the moment, we've focused very, very much on getting to a position where they can start trading again, which is our immediate focus this week on providing some framework for them to be able to prepare and get ready for our timetable going forward—if we manage to keep our results looking as they are.

**Media:** Dr Bloomfield, do you have an update on the situation at the Waitakere Hospital and how many staff have been tested and whether there's any more clarity about where those cases originated?

**Dr Ashley Bloomfield:** So what I do know is that there were the three nurses who had all nursed the six COVID-positive patients who had come from St Margaret's. There has been wide testing of their close contacts, both family and work, and no further positives there—sorry, except for one of the nurses, a family probable case. But I don't have any other further information. They're all still in isolation and there is, obviously, an audit under way to try to find out what the source of the infection was for those three nurses.

**Media:** And is it right that all staff have been offered testing?

**Dr Ashley Bloomfield:** Yes. All of the staff who would be close contacts and who have been stood down would be offered testing.

**Media:** Is it fair to say that this is a wake-up call for that practice, allowing staff to move between COVID and non-COVID wards?

**Dr Ashley Bloomfield:** Well, what it is—and this is what we've done right through over the last few weeks—is a learning experience. So there is a review under way. It's going to be reporting by Friday this week. It includes senior people from within the district health board as well as an independent person from—the Director of Nursing from Waikato DHB, and we're as interested in this and I think all DHBs are interested, what can we learn, how do we strengthen our protocols and make sure that we are reducing the risk to our front-line health workers, and this will provide us with information for that.

**PM:** It's still important, just to reiterate, they weren't working between wards on a single shift.

**Media:** Prime Minister, you previously said that if someone has symptoms, even if they're not too severe, they should be able to go get a test. Should someone who's in managed self-isolation after having entered the country and has mild symptoms like a sore throat or nausea—should they have been tested?

**PM:** I'm expecting that's for the doctor.

**Dr Ashley Bloomfield:** Yes, certainly everybody in managed isolation is checked at least daily, of course, and if appropriate and there are clinical staff on site—if appropriate there would be a low threshold for testing. That doesn't mean everybody would necessarily be tested, but I know there would be a low threshold.

**Media:** [*Inaudible*] repatriation flights practise social distancing? We're hearing that people on, for example, one of the flights from India in the economy class seats were sat next to each other with no space between them. Is that something that concerns you?

**Dr Ashley Bloomfield:** Well, I know there will have been careful thought put into how to reduce the risk of anyone on a flight being infected, and that will include pre-screening before people even get on the flight as well as measures during a flight and afterwards. And then, of course, all of those people are going into the mandatory 14 days' managed isolation when they get back.

**Media:** Prime Minister, just on trans-Tasman travel, one of the possible issues is whether insurers will actually cover people for travel insurance if they get sick in the other country, given a declared pandemic is still in place. Has any consideration been given to this?

**PM:** I see that as a hypothetical quite far down the track. I think the first step would actually be working on the future prospects of the travel plan rather than all of the things that act as a by-product from that.

**Media:** Do you support Taiwan re-joining the WHO?

**PM:** As you can imagine, the WHO membership is not something I've spent a lot of time thinking about at present.

**Media:** Why doesn't New Zealand have a position on this?

**PM:** Again, because it's not my decision around WHO membership. As with collective institutions, there's a much wider body that makes these decisions. But, again, it's not something I've spent a lot of time thinking about.

**Media:** Are you weighing up the risk to mental health with the risk of catching COVID when it comes to people having to go through tragic experiences alone, and, if I could also just compound on that, a lot of the DHBs are referencing allowing people in on compassionate grounds. What do you consider compassionate grounds?

**PM:** Again, look, there are a range of considerations that the Ministry of Health are using, and there's good reason why these aren't decisions that have been made by us, but

by people who are weighing up health and mental health wellbeing. And those will be things that those who work in health will be thinking about. We have been thinking about the mental health of all New Zealanders; New Zealanders who lose individuals, who lose family members, who lose friends, but also who are just finding isolation a real struggle. And one of the things that has probably surprised me the most, I've received multiple letters from people who have lost family members in the most devastating circumstances, who've written just to say it was hard, but they still thought it was the right thing to do, to act the way we have been. That, to me, demonstrates a huge amount of selflessness of those people on behalf of all of New Zealand.

**Media:** Have you received the Crown Law advice on the *Ruby Princess* yet, and will you be taking that—

**PM:** No. Let me follow it up. The last time I checked it was something that they were working alongside those agencies who had direct responsibility for the legislation; primarily, and obviously, Customs playing a big role there. So it's a reminder for me to check back in on that. Thank you.

**Media:** In terms of the bubble, has any work been done on when we open up to travel across the whole of New Zealand—so New Zealand's bubble—how long we would have to wait to percolate, if you like, before we could go into a trans-Tasman bubble?

**PM:** Actually, for me, this is a chance to make sure that we get things at our domestic airports right. We do have an aviation advisory group that are meeting together this week and have been working on all of the issues you would expect us to have thought through for the more fulsome resumption of domestic travel. We do want to make sure that when people are travelling domestically, particularly on planes and through airports, that they are doing it safely. That'll give us a bit of a start on what it might look like if, in the future, we're opening up more broadly with other borders.

**Media:** A time frame on that—I mean, have you done any work on whether that would say be a month or two months, or—

**PM:** For a trans-Tasman?

**Media:** So for how long we would have to stay in just a New Zealand bubble before we opened it up.

**PM:** Well, actually what's interesting—New Zealand is, of course, one border, so really what we are doing now is testing whether or not we have issue with community transmission. That then is being replicated at state level; that's why, obviously, decisions need to be made in Australia between how they're going to resume their domestic movements, but that's obviously a matter for them.

**Media:** Prime Minister, the National Party today put up a proposal for \$8 billion of spending to help business. They say this is both more targeted and more generous than what your Government has done so far. It's a mixture of GST refunds and tax breaks, and it would only go to businesses who can show two months of continuous 50 percent loss of revenue, so much more targeted than the wage subsidy. What do you make of a plan like that? Does that make some sense?

**PM:** Look, to be honest, I haven't had a huge amount of time to look into the detail of what they propose. It's not clear to me—I'm assuming that this is instead of what we have proposed—and, in part, I would be surprised by that, because the wage subsidy has made a huge difference to a number of businesses with varying different circumstances but all who have had need and it has kept employees directly connected to their workplace. And it did it quickly; within days of application we were managing to get money out the door. I know it's made a difference and I will be surprised if the National Party didn't support that.

**Media:** Will you be spending up to \$8 billion next week, or is that a bit more than you really have on hand?

**PM:** I obviously won't be giving away any of our future spending decisions from the Budget, but if you look back on the wage subsidy, that's been over \$10 billion directly into the pockets of people who may have found themselves otherwise unemployed, and an extra \$3 billion directly into our tax system to help with small businesses who are experiencing tough times right now.

**Media:** Very quickly on the zero cases—how did you react when you learnt we had consecutive zeros?

**PM:** Again, you know, I'm pleased. Every time we have a good result, of course I'm pleased, but for us it's about sustaining this and so never get ahead of ourselves is the message right now. Thanks everyone.

**conclusion of press conference**