

**PRIME MINISTER AND DIRECTOR-GENERAL OF HEALTH PRESS CONFERENCE:  
WEDNESDAY, 13 MAY 2020**

**PM:** Kia ora koutou katoa. Just as a bit of a heads up, I think you're all aware that I'll be making some slightly longer comments today, just as a bit of a preview to the Budget tomorrow. But, obviously, before I do that, I will hand over to Dr Bloomfield.

**Dr Ashley Bloomfield:** Thank you, Prime Minister. Kia ora koutou katoa. Again today we're reporting no new cases of COVID-19. This encouraging news means that New Zealand's combined total of confirmed and probable cases remains at 1,497, of which 1,147 are confirmed. So we now have 1,042 people who have been confirmed as having recovered from COVID-19, an increase of 12 on yesterday, and the overall percentage increases to 94 percent. Again today there are just two people receiving hospital-level care. Neither are in ICU. We still have 16 significant clusters, four of which, as you know, are closed, and there are no additional deaths to report today.

Yesterday, our laboratories across the country processed 5,961 tests, and our total now is 203,045 processed. So this milestone of 200,000 tests, which is just over 4 percent of the population, is a significant achievement. I want to recognise everybody who has been tested, as well as the many, many people across the system who have facilitated that happening. It's an incredibly important pillar of our response to COVID-19.

As we prepare for level 2 tomorrow, the sense of anticipation is both palpable and understandable. We are looking forward to re-establishing some of the routines and rhythms of our near-normal lives. In level 2, it's vital we do continue to model the personal behaviours that are going to keep COVID-19 out of New Zealand and out of our communities, and so just to reiterate those key messages and the key measures: keep your distance from other people when out in public, including in transport. If you are sick, stay home; don't go to work or school and don't socialise if you are unwell. If you have symptoms of a cold or flu, call your doctor or Healthline and tell them the symptoms and ask about getting tested. Good hand hygiene continues to be paramount—the simplest and most effective tool we have to keep COVID-19 at bay. Social gatherings are a maximum of 10 people at once, and please keep track of where you have been, to help us with contact tracing in case it is needed.

So today's figures do reinforce that we are on the right path, that we are maintaining the gains made through alert levels 4 and 3, and we're heading for success. But as you will have seen overnight from other jurisdictions, this is a stubborn virus, and we don't want to be going down the path where we see spikes again, so we can't afford to give away the progress we've made. We need to remain vigilant.

Finally, some comments on the review that the Waitematā DHB was doing of the experience in Waitakere Hospital and beyond, with the St Margaret's cluster there. I received a copy of the review report yesterday, late in the day. It was being considered by the board of the district health board this morning and is going to be released at 2 o'clock this afternoon. It's a really good example, I think, of rapid and transparent reviewing of our response to COVID-19 in a very particular setting so that we can learn and then translate those learnings into our advice nationally so that all district health boards can benefit from that. It had a panel of four people, including representatives from the New Zealand Nurses Organisation, and I'm really pleased to have received that report and to see that it is going to be made public later today in an open and constructive way. Thank you, Prime Minister.

**PM:** Thank you, Dr Bloomfield. Just before I come to the Budget, I do want to speak to some of the hardest parts of the alert level framework, and these parts have been difficult through the entirety of our response to COVID-19 but are particularly pronounced at alert level 2, and they are, namely, funerals and tangihanga. This morning we've instigated calls between church leaders—Dr Bloomfield and myself were part of a call this morning—

funeral directors, and iwi leaders to see if we can find a way to further satisfy health concerns—which are legitimate, particularly given that we have seen overseas and particular research demonstrating that funerals and weddings have been part of the spread of COVID-19 in many countries—but also recognise that funerals and tangi are exceptional. They are life events that cannot be postponed. I do believe that we are well on our way to finding a solution that will meet both of these concerns, and I expect the Minister of Health will have more to say on that before the end of the day. It will still mean that there will be, of course, still restrictions, but we are working hard to see if we can find ways to accommodate some of the concerns that have been raised, within the capacity of the Ministry of Health to help give the reassurance that some of those issues can be managed.

Tomorrow afternoon, Budget 2020 will be delivered within the most challenging economic conditions faced by any Government since the Great Depression. The global COVID-19 pandemic has triggered a global economic shock not of our making, but like every country in the world, we are also not immune to its fallout. Now, let me be clear. The coming months and years will be some of the most challenging our country has faced in a very, very long time. The International Monetary Fund predicts the global economy will contract by 3 percent in 2020, much worse than during the global financial crisis.

Around the world, unemployment will rise significantly. Businesses will fail and close. Government revenue will decline, and we will see the pain here too. New Zealand is about to enter a very tough winter, but every winter eventually is followed by spring, and if we make the right choices, we can get New Zealanders back to work and our economy moving quickly again.

Today I want to set out the values that underpin our economic response to the virus and signal how we intend to tackle it. Firstly, though, the best economic response to the virus was always going to be a strong health response. Going hard and early means economic opportunities, and faster than many trading partners.

I know the last seven weeks have been a huge challenge to business, which is why the first phase in our economic response has been entirely focused on assisting business to stay afloat and supporting New Zealanders to stay connected to their jobs.

I'm enormously proud of the work finance Minister Grant Robertson and social development Minister Carmel Sepuloni did with the wage subsidy scheme. This nearly \$11 billion investment has ensured that over a million and a half workers have stayed employed and connected to their jobs during the toughest period of the lockdown, while providing a guarantee to businesses to keep going, as they can start to get back on their feet at level 2.

Sitting alongside the wage subsidy has been the largest suite of business tax changes in modern history, aimed at freeing up cash flow to support businesses when they couldn't trade, and our no-interest loan scheme provides much-needed cash for things like rent and other costs as they get up and running.

These measures have worked so far. Our unemployment rate will, sadly, increase, but it has not, to date, spiked. And Treasury scenarios suggest that because we stayed at level 4 and 3 for a shorter period of time, our unemployment rate could end up at the lower end of their projected ranges.

Dealing to the virus quickly also allows other economic opportunities. A possible trans-Tasman bubble, when safe, could see New Zealand and Australia opening up greater tourism and trade opportunities while our borders have to stay closed to the rest of the world, offering some additional reprieve for our tourism and hospitality industries.

But the next stage in our journey of rebuilding together is recovery. Our focus now is the jobs and incomes of businesses and New Zealanders. Budget 2020 is but the first step in this phase. In normal years the Budget sets out the Government's economic plans for the following year in detail, but this Budget is different. It is not business as usual. Instead, it is a tailored solution to a unique situation. There is no playbook for the recovery we are about to embark on, but nor do we need one. When it has come to COVID-19, we have carved a

path based on our people, our health system, and our economy, and now that is exactly what we will do again as we recover and rebuild.

Let me say from the outset, the team and I will bring the same determination and focus to the economic rebuild as we brought to our health response. To start that phase, we need to consider what our objectives are and the best steps to achieve them. The finance Minister will set out much of this tomorrow, and I won't pre-empt anything he has to say on that, but today I can set out what we are trying to achieve and the values that we bring to the work. The first thing you'll notice is that we believe when times are hard, you don't cut; you invest. We will run the ruler over every line of expenditure. No question, we need to ensure that our expenditure provides value for money and supports our primary goal of jobs. But the notion that at this time of need we would make cuts to the essential services so many New Zealanders need more than ever is not only immoral; it's economically wrong.

That's why yesterday we made the biggest investment in health funding in two decades. It's why on Monday we delivered pay equity for early childhood teachers. It's why one of the first things we did when the virus hit was to increase benefits to ensure those who lost their job had more to help them through. Now more than ever we need our schools and hospitals, our public houses, and roads, and railways. We need our police and our nurses, and we need our welfare safety net. We will not let our team of 5 million fall when the times get tough. Instead, we will strengthen the blanket of support that Government is there to provide. We are rebuilding together, not apart.

These foundations are essential. They are our base. But on top of them we must build the things that accelerate employment, empower businesses, and stimulate our productive economy. A relentless focus on jobs, the economy, and businesses is what's required now for the wellbeing of New Zealanders. Projections suggest our economic shock could be sharp but, hopefully, short. That means we need a plan to get us through the worst and position us well for recovery. The biggest fiscal asset we currently have to get us through the worst is the Government's balance sheet. Due to our prudent economic management of the books, heading into lockdown we had debt under 20 percent of GDP, lower than what we inherited it at; low unemployment around 4 percent; and an Aaa foreign currency rating from Moody's. I defended the surpluses we ran in our first two Budgets on the basis that we needed to prepare financially for a rainy day. Well, that day has well and truly arrived.

The Government's ability to borrow at very low interest rates places us in a strong position to weather the economic storm ahead, but more than that, we are well positioned to use our balance sheet to shelter New Zealanders from the worst impacts of the fallout, and in doing so, protect jobs and grow our economy. Our number one priority is jobs, and that's why this will be a jobs Budget. That means doing all we can to support people staying in their current job or moving to a new one if needed. And the reason for that is simple. It harks back to the sentiment of Norman Kirk—that all anyone ever really needs is something to do, somewhere to live, someone to love, and something to hope for.

Employment helps form a foundation. It supports families. It pays the bills. It helps provide self-value and worth, and when times are tough like this, workplaces can provide an important support network. Our plan is to invest. By investing we will create jobs and get the economy moving again. Just as the rising tide lifts all boats, a growing economy has the ability to support us all and allows us to bring the Government books back into the black.

This is not going to be the work of just one Budget. It will require relentless focus on growth and jobs, and not just growth for growth's sake, but in a way that acknowledges we have challenges to our environment, to our wellbeing, that we can also use this time to help resolve. Tomorrow you will see how we will start to do that. But in the same way that we have fought the virus together, we also need to start our rebuild together. That will take all of us.

In the coming month the Government will launch a comprehensive engagement programme that will pose a simple proposition: look at what our team of 5 million achieved together in beating the virus. Now what can we do together to get our economy moving again, to look

after our people, and rebuild in a way that makes things better than they were before? That will, of course, include the business community. But it will be broader too.

If anything, the last few months have shown us that united, we are formidable force. When we channel our energies into a goal collectively, we are stronger for it. Prior to the virus we faced serious long-term challenges: persistent inequality, poverty, the threat of climate change, the need to diversify the economy, low productivity, limited domestic manufacturing, and an abundance of low-paid jobs. Do we return to those settings, or is now the time to find a better way?

There are tough times to come, but we have experienced tough times before, and when confronted with external crisis—we had a Great Depression, a world war, and now a global health pandemic—our instinct has been to come together as business, as community, as iwi, as New Zealand. And we will again. We will use the strength of our economic position as Government to carry the load while businesses and households get back on their feet. The situation is constantly changing, and the future may feel uncertain, but as I said right at the beginning, we have a plan. We know it will be tough, but we will get through it the same way we got through the past two months—together. Happy to take your questions.

**Media:** How did you get it so wrong on funerals and tangi, you and your Ministers, and, Dr Bloomfield, given your health position on this, how uncomfortable are you about any loosening of the restrictions?

**PM:** Again, I would just not pre-empt that we are still working through some of the details on how we can make sure that we accommodate both those concerns—the health concerns that still exist, but also see if we can find a way to acknowledge the exceptional time that a tangi and a funeral presents.

What I also do want to point out is that we're not alone in this situation. You'll see that we're not dissimilar to other countries and the restrictions that apply and have applied to date to funerals, for the same reasons: making sure that we don't lose the gains that have been so hard fought for. But again, as I say, we are working through, and we've always said we'll be agile and keep trying to find how we can make things work to keep people safe, but acknowledge that this is an incredibly tough thing for New Zealanders to go through.

**Dr Ashley Bloomfield:** So our public health advice was, in part, predicated on trying to get consistency around the group of activities that we saw as the highest risk. So, obviously, there's been a lot of feedback about this particular circumstance, so we've engaged, listened, and we're trying to work through solutions there that will still mitigate the public health risks but will address the concerns and the opportunities that I think people who are holding funerals and/or tangihanga are wanting to explore.

**PM:** Just for clarity, we'll put out some further details on this by this afternoon, but I should be clear: there will still be restrictions in place. I don't want to leave the impression that that won't be the case. And again, I was discussing with my Chief Science Advisor just this morning the fact that in the United States, they've done pieces of work that have demonstrated funerals and weddings as the origin for outbreaks. That has been the case across the globe, and so we are still managing that scenario in New Zealand.

**Media:** Prime Minister—

**PM:** I'll come to you, Maiki, and then I'll come to you, Tova. Maiki.

**Media:** What sort of impact has the iwi and the public pressure had, though, on your decision?

**PM:** Oh, I think we always said, and this has been the case for every single stage of our response—and there have been other areas where we've engaged and tried to accommodate the health protections that we need for all New Zealanders but also found ways to try and accommodate different activity. We've done that all the way through, and I think that's something that we should continue to do, and I don't shy away from that. We've

always said that we wanted to be as agile as we could be, but we still must maintain those protections, because they are there for everyone.

**Media:** Dr Bloomfield talked about it being predicated on consistency, but that was the problem with this—it was the inconsistency that you could have a hundred strangers in a movie theatre, for example, but not 100 people physically distanced at a burial site. Why was it so inconsistent?

**Dr Ashley Bloomfield:** The consistency was around group size, and I think the Prime Minister's articulated that over the last couple of days—about why you are bringing people together for a common purpose, and that's what we were aiming to be consistent on, because that is where the highest risk is: it's the mixing and mingling. So what we are working on are ways that we can, in this particular situation, help mitigate the public health risks and balance those against the very clear needs of people at that time.

**Media:** Prime Minister, do you recognise how much hurt you and the Government are causing grieving families?

**PM:** I think COVID-19 is causing hurt—immeasurable hurt—and as we try—

**Media:** But here's something you can fix.

**PM:** As we try and make sure that we prevent people from experiencing undue pain by having to confront this virus, I do accept that there has been consequences of that. And, in fact, you've seen me almost every day in this press conference acknowledge that, because I've seen it up close. I have colleagues and friends who have gone through funeral and tangi through lockdown and through level 3. And so we've always accepted that. What we're trying to do is make sure that we can maintain the principles we've always had to protect people whilst at the same time seeing if there are other accommodations that can be made if we have certain measures in place. So that's what we are leaving the health team to work through with iwi leaders, with funeral directors, and we've also had conversations with religious figures.

**Media:** As you say, you've consistently said that same message in acknowledging that it's hard. Why, then, did you not start working on this much earlier so that these changes could be in place? What changed your mind over the last 24 hours?

**PM:** I still absolutely hold the view that, of course, we unfortunately still have to have restrictions here, and you will still see that in place. What we're seeing is whether or not we can accommodate within resourcing the ability for there to be, really, checks and balances to support funeral directors in managing some of that directly, as well. And so—

**Media:** What does that mean, Prime Minister?

**PM:** It means in a couple of hours that you'll get the detail from the Minister of Health around whether or not we can put a process that involves funeral directors and the Ministry of Health working together on individual funerals. And so that detail we'll be putting out in a couple of hours, but you'll understand why I'd want to give due regard to the view of funeral directors, who the Minister of Health is talking with about some of these ideas and proposals to make sure that they're workable. But, ultimately, we have always said that we wanted to work through issues where they arose. You'll look overseas and see the likes of Australia have the same consistent limitations, albeit they use the number 10 and the number 20, and some have not engaged at all in public gatherings at all. So this has been something that every country has had to address. New Zealand is not unique.

The one final comment I do want to make: we have to absolutely exercise caution here. New Zealand is not out of the woods yet, and we have to remember that although we're moving into alert level 2, the issue continues to be managing places where we're all congregating together. And that's the consistency Dr Bloomfield spoke about. You'll see other areas where New Zealanders will be in similar places together, but not for the purposes of them socialising together. And that is the difference, because it wasn't that you saw New Zealanders at a retail store getting COVID; you saw them getting it at weddings.

**Media:** [*Inaudible*] move into level 2 tomorrow, what PPE gear do hairdressers have to wear, and can they operate without it?

**Dr Ashley Bloomfield:** So I know that the hairdressing association or their peak body has put out guidance with quite clear expectations around what they will wear. Our infection prevention and control experts have said that the most important thing, if they want to wear it, is a mask, and that is because they are repeatedly within the metre, and seeing a number of clients on a day. However, I think the important thing here is for hairdressers, beauticians, and, indeed, everybody, schools, whatever the setting—the key thing here is we did not give the advice to move to alert level 2 before we knew we had got on top of the virus and the risk of it being out there was very, very low. So the advice—again, the infection prevention and control expert’s advice to everybody around use of PPE, whether in the healthcare setting or non-healthcare setting or to the general public, is very much predicated on the situation we find ourselves in, which is quite different from other countries who have relaxed their measures.

**Media:** Can they open if they don’t wear it?

**Dr Ashley Bloomfield:** Sorry?

**Media:** Could they open if they don’t wear it?

**Dr Ashley Bloomfield:** Yes, they could if they wanted to. Our advice is that they can; it’s optional. But their advice from their association, and my understanding is this is what they’re gearing up to, is to have masks and so on available. So, I think, you know, that’s good that their peak body has provided that advice to them, and that is partly also about them making sure they are feeling safe as we go down to alert level 2.

**Media:** Just back on funerals and tangi. What about enforcement—would you support police breaking up a small burial of 30 grieving family members?

**PM:** No one wants to see that. You’ll have seen from the enforcement framework that the police have always used, and I anticipate that they will keep using—in fact, they’ve indicated that—that their focus has always been on education first. They move through a four-step process where it’s talking about what the expectations are. They then move through warnings, and then further down is, of course, the harsher end of enforcement. Ultimately, no one wants to see that, but these guidelines are in place, ultimately, because we want to protect people, and we want to make sure that no one experiences harm in their own family or in their own community.

**Media:** So say a funeral of a hundred people then went ahead while these restrictions are still in place, would you support police breaking that up or issuing warnings?

**PM:** Again, you’ve just heard me say that no one wants to see those kinds of situations, and the best way, of course, to avoid that is to make sure that we have arrangements in place that do the very best possible to accommodate all of the health concerns but also the unique nature of funerals. What I will say is it is not for me to dictate what the police will do, because they decide on an individual basis. But I don’t think anyone in New Zealand wants to see a scene like that.

**Media:** Dr Bloomfield, in Australia, at least in most states, up to 20 people are able to attend an indoor funeral. Thirty people is the limit for outdoor funerals. Is that a more appropriate limit?

**Dr Ashley Bloomfield:** Well, it’s a different limit, and there are a number of differences between the steps we’re taking as we move into alert level 2, and a whole range of settings that are different from Australia. We’ve certainly looked at the Australian advice already and we had the benefit of having that to inform our advice to our Government, so I think it’s just a different limit. I think the key thing here is it’s also still very conservative, and that’s because Australia, like us and other countries, recognise that it’s the gathering of people at events like that that creates the highest risk of transmission.

**PM:** I think one thing to add as well—you'll see that the way we've set out our framework, we are moving at pace. There is a chance that we'll have fewer restrictions in a shorter period of time, but what we've successfully done is really locked in guarantees that we've made the progress we believe we have before we take too many risks. Social gatherings are the biggest risk factor for us, and that's why there are those limitations there. One final context point is many of you will have seen overnight ongoing reporting of second waves in places, in some cases, that haven't had cases for up to a month. You know, that is a warning shot to us that we do need to be really careful. No one wants to go backwards, but we're seeing other countries who have had significant precautions who have, so we do want to make sure we move and we keep moving, but we do so cautiously.

**Media:** Prime Minister, what do you make of the facial recognition trial, and are you concerned that the Privacy Commissioner wasn't aware of that?

**PM:** The facial recognition trial?

**Media:** By police.

**PM:** I would need to look in more detail around that. I have no comment to make on those operational decisions.

**Media:** Clearview AI?

**PM:** Sorry?

**Media:** It was Clearview AI.

**PM:** No. I can't comment on that, unfortunately. Right down the back.

**Media:** Auckland City Mission has said that its food parcel and accommodation support is very short-term and shouldn't be compared to emergency benefits for migrants. Don't you need to do both, otherwise we'll end up with migrants on the street?

**PM:** Yeah, so we did use that in the initial response because it was fast, it got support out the door, and it had flexibility. I don't deny that we will need a longer-term framework, but for now, that has been a very important part of our response.

**Media:** So that longer-term framework could be emergency benefits—

**PM:** I don't want to get ahead of any further decision-making, but what has been important is right from the beginning that that support was available and it had flexibility, particularly around accommodation and the way that sometimes other grants don't provide that level of accommodation support. It could be done to tailor to the needs of those that on the ground were being seen by our community emergency management teams. Bernard, I know you'll have you'll have a follow-up on that.

**Media:** Prime Minister, do you agree with your Deputy Prime Minister that those 300,000-plus guest workers should go home and they should have gone home when they had the chance and that's why all they're getting is tins of baked beans from CDEM?

**PM:** Whilst I haven't seen the entirety of those comments, my view is that many of those workers would not have had a chance to make those kinds of decisions. Things happened very, very quickly. Some would have lost their jobs at a point when it would not have been possible to make any other plans, which is why we've always said we have to take a compassionate approach for those who've found themselves in a circumstance where they were unable to make any alternative arrangements, be it a tourist who may have found themselves here, be it someone on a working holiday visa, be it someone who had a work visa. That is why we have sought to support them. So that would be my perspective on why it was important that that care was taken.

**Media:** So why not use the Social Security Act to give them a benefit too?

**PM:** Yeah, as I've said many, many times down here—that what we used was a way to provide similar support, but quickly, on the ground, and face-to-face with those who required it. I do acknowledge that as we move into a transition phase and out of our

national emergency management response mode, which we are doing, we will need a specific response tailored to that group, because of course we won't have those community-level agencies available for too much longer.

**Media:** So are you saying that there might be some sort of benefit to help—

**PM:** No. I'm just saying there's more work to be done there, Bernard—that I acknowledge that there's a gap there; that we have plugged it for now but it will require a longer-term response and plan.

**Media:** [*Inaudible*] Joyce said yesterday, "Telling them to cope with no money at all is simply not how we see ourselves as a country. I have no idea why the Prime Minister is not acting. Why isn't she showing more compassion?". What's your view that this is not a compassionate view?

**PM:** Well, I would reject that we haven't been supporting those who found themselves in that position. Millions of dollars was provided to those who were providing support on the ground, directly for those individuals in need. Sarah Stuart-Black, from our national emergency management team, is in Auckland looking at some of the response that's been provided out of Spark Arena and the care that's being provided, just to see that it was in keeping with our expectations there as well. And she equally did the same thing in Queenstown, where we did see a rush for support there as well.

**Media:** So Newsroom is reporting today that—

**PM:** I'll make that the last question there, Bernard.

**Media:** —that one pregnant woman has told us she's so afraid—

**PM:** Actually, yesterday I think it might have been reported that—

**Media:** No, this is a new report this morning—saying that one pregnant woman is so afraid of asking for food, even though she has food cravings. She can't understand why this amount of food is [*Inaudible*].

**PM:** And that should not be the case. I repeat the same message I used yesterday. We provided tens of millions for those services to make sure people had their needs met, and that included accommodation. So I do not want this just reduced down to food parcels because that was not what was intended.

**Media:** Prime Minister, on the Budget—

**PM:** Yeah, thank you for noticing.

**Media:** —will it give businesses that full clarity for them to make decisions about their future—so whether they can be sustainable going forward?

**PM:** Yeah, we have had concerns raised over, you know, what the next steps are for those in particular who have drawn down on the wage subsidy, which has been a significant number of business owners and employers. As I've signalled, there was more support, and is more support, for businesses coming, and they can look for that in the Budget.

**Media:** Looking back to the DHB cash yesterday that was announced, what do you see as a priority for that, in cancer treatment, or—and also will any of it be used to pay off deficits?

**PM:** Sorry, can you repeat the first half of your question?

**Media:** What do you see is the priority for spending, in cancer treatment or anything like that?

**PM:** Yeah, so there was a specific allocation that was around catch-up procedures in particular. We know that there's a significant number of calls on DHBs' resourcing, and, of course, we've been saying that since we took office—that there were deficits. There was infrastructure deficits. We needed to be able to fix the facilities in which services were provided and support and grow the workforce. But we have put in a specific allocation that

is designed to catch up on elective procedures and other procedures that may have been delayed because of COVID. That is then up to the DHB to make sure they are able to deliver that. Down the front and then I'll come back to you Maiki, and then Tova.

**Media:** What is your stance on—there's a bar owner of HeadQuarters bar, Leo Molloy, who's going ahead with a level 2 party on Friday of 100 people. He's saying that it's allowed. What's your stance on it?

**PM:** No, as we've always said, of course, we will be operating under the Anzac provisions right through to the 21<sup>st</sup>, and even within that, there can't be groups of more than 10. That's that consistency we've had across the board—cannot have groups more than 10 socialising, mixing, mingling together. That's why there are such strict rules around seating and so on within different parts of hospitality. I have heard some confused reporting, though, over the owner's engagement with the police in particular, so it's not entirely clear to me what his intentions are, if I'm honest.

**Media:** Police having the power under the public health response bill to enter private premises without a warrant—does that still sit comfortably with you, given a number of organisations, including the Human Rights Commission, have raised serious concerns about that? And also the removal of the word “marae” from that legislation—

**PM:** Yes.

**Media:** —is that an admission you got that wrong?

**PM:** Well, let me give you a little bit of context there. Of course, we've been operating under emergency powers, but now is the time to step away from those and narrow those provisions. It is simply not appropriate for us, when we're at a lower alert level, to continue under national emergency powers, so it is time to transition. So that is why what we've put through is a narrower bill, so we've taken away some of the powers that existed before, because they're not necessary and they're not right. What we do need, though, is the ability, if there is a large, large gathering of people—you know, we could even have a situation of someone who has COVID within it—we do have to have some ability to disperse that if it's causing a risk to people's health and their safety. And so that's what that bill provides, is simply the ability to enforce, but in a much narrower way than we had previously.

On the issue of the reference to “marae”, what the bill explicitly did was actually make sure that rather than marae be treated potentially as commercial premises, where there are wider powers, to actually narrow it and make sure they had the same protection as private dwellings. That was the intent, so that there was no question and that there was that distinction in there. But after concerns were raised, there was no question that we would rather respond to that, even given that explanation behind it.

**Media:** Yeah, so [*Inaudible*] get it wrong on that one?

**PM:** No. Again, if you talk to the Attorney-General, he maintains the view that it was important to try and provide those protections, but equally, at the same time, if we have a call from others to say that they would prefer not to have it explicitly, then that's something that he's heard there.

**Media:** Did you consult with Māori when you came up with those protections, though, or was that a protection that you put on to them?

**PM:** Again, these are things drafted within Crown Law with consultation with the Attorney-General. It was something there was some discussion over why it was explicit, and the explanation around providing extra protection was, of course, raised. But for explicit consultation, always question the Attorney-General, because he was managing the bill. In the front.

**Media:** Specifically what powers aren't in the new legislation that have been held under the emergency powers?

**PM:** It's probably easier if I just talk about what—of course, it depends on what's in the order. So the orders that we're using now are much, much more curtailed, and so, really, the ability to disperse gatherings and just maintain what is in an order. And you'll see for alert level 2 those orders are very small. It's basically social distancing and gatherings. And so, again, using broad-sweeping national emergency powers are just not suitable under those circumstances. Jo.

**Media:** For those people who have lost loved ones during level 3 and have waited till tomorrow to have a funeral, assuming that the restrictions would have loosened, can you guarantee that loosened restrictions will be in place for them from tomorrow, and can you give them at least a little bit of clarity now as to what that might look like?

**PM:** Yeah, and so Minister Clark and Minister Davis were finishing calls with funeral directors only in the last hour or so, so I expect that information will be provided, yes, before we move into alert level 2. So yes, they will have that clarity. Again, I do want to just acknowledge that there will still be restrictions, but we are trying to accommodate, as I said, both the concerns on both sides around health mitigations but also the exceptional circumstances of funeral and tangi. Jessica, and then I'll finish with Tova and then Ben.

**Media:** A question from our Australian correspondent: the relationship between China and Australia at the moment could be described as tense; what impact does that have on us?

**PM:** Well, actually, we are our own relationship, obviously, so it really—it doesn't, and nor should it. We've an independent relationship—one, of course, which we've long fostered. New Zealand has been the subject of a number of firsts when it comes to our relationship with China, not least the signing of our free-trade agreement, visitors from Prime Ministers, and so on. So it is an independent relationship, and one, obviously, that's important to us.

**Media:** Prime Minister, thank you. A number of churches are concerned that the 10-person limit is stopping them and their communities from attending weekly church and worship services. Is that fair when the same thing applies with movie theatres and gyms that we were talking about before?

**PM:** Yeah, and, again, there's those definitions around socialising and congregation, and I absolutely understand and have had a few engagements with—obviously, as I spoke of this morning, there's a church leaders group that Minister Salesa convenes that I was able to join and discuss briefly, and there are some different views amongst church leaders. But the main point I think I would emphasise is we hope this is for a short, short time. I'm as keen as anyone to get New Zealanders in a position where those who are of faith and wish to be able to come back together—particularly at this testing time—are able to do that.

**Media:** And Brian Tamaki is vowing to go ahead with a Destiny Church service this weekend. Should that be stopped?

**PM:** We want him to listen to public advice, in the same way that we want everyone to. No one wants to risk an outbreak, and I'm sure he wouldn't want to put his congregation at risk. Finish with Ben.

**Media:** I've got one more colleague—thank you, Ben. Has any decision been made about how ski fields will be able to operate?

**PM:** I actually understand that the likes of Cardrona and others have actually been working quite productively on guidelines—I think in conjunction with the ministry. So last I heard, they had made some good progress, but I wouldn't want to speak in too much detail on that.

**Media:** National isn't supporting the enforcement legislation, and National were the ones that launched the petition to relax the restrictions on [*Inaudible*]. So it feels a lot like after an extraordinary period—like a laying down of arms during the lockdown period—that campaigning for the election is [*Inaudible*]. Is that fair to say, for the public [*Inaudible*]?

**PM:** Well, look, all I would reflect on is it was only a few weeks ago that they were bringing science advisers before the committee that were concerned around whether or not New Zealand was moving too quickly. As I've always said, we have to keep in mind making sure that we open back up the economy in the safest way possible and not lose the potential economic advantage we have of being amongst the first countries to do so. And so that is the challenge that we have. Where the Opposition choose to position themselves on that is for them. I'm getting on with trying to get this right. Claire. You haven't had a question.

**Media:** Mine is for Dr Bloomfield.

**PM:** Oh, go ahead.

**Media:** It's from a reader who wants to know if dogs can once again play together and we can pat other people's dogs at level 2.

**Dr Ashley Bloomfield:** Yes, they can get together—no more than groups of 10. And, yes, it's safe to pat dogs, but as with anything, wash your hands thoroughly afterwards.

**PM:** Nothing if not consistent. All right. Thank you, everyone.

**conclusion of press conference**