

POST-CABINET PRESS CONFERENCE: MONDAY, 29 JUNE 2020

PM: Kia ora koutou katoa. Good afternoon, everyone. This week, Parliament is, obviously, sitting, so I will be in Wellington until Thursday. On Wednesday, 1 July, a number of Government initiatives come into force, including extending paid parental leave to 26 weeks. As of this Wednesday, the coalition will have increased by two months the amount of paid time new parents get to spend with their babies, demonstrating our commitment to families by removing economic barriers to parents spending those all-important early months with their children.

On Thursday, I will attend the Waikato-Tainui Kīngitanga accord meeting, and on Friday I'll be in Auckland to make an announcement on new school buildings. On Sunday, I will deliver the keynote address to the Labour Party congress here in Wellington.

The past couple of weeks have been dominated by new cases of COVID arriving into our quarantine and managed isolation facilities at our border and the strengthening of our border defence. With no playbook to pre-empt the twists and turns of this virus, we will have issues to fix as we go, and it is right that these concerns are raised.

You will not find a harsher critic than me when things aren't perfect in our system, but it's important these issues are put into perspective and examined alongside the facts and also within the global context. The overarching fact remains that New Zealand is in an extremely good position, and we will fight to keep it that way. Catching cases at the border, as we will continue to do, is the system working.

In the 13 days since the positive confirmation of the New Zealand sisters who returned from London to visit their dying parent, 82,862 tests have been conducted in New Zealand, with not a single case in the community identified. That represents 21 percent of all the testing we have done since the outbreak started, in just the last two weeks. Since we began testing, we have been averaging 2,487 tests a day. In the past two weeks, that average jumped to 6,028—and, as I say, still no evidence of cases outside of managed isolation facilities.

On managed facilities and new cases, the evidence from the last 14 days is positive. All the new cases have been picked up through routine testing on about day three and day 12 and also through our health checks. That has meant that, currently, every active case in New Zealand is in a facility of some form—all 22 of them.

In that same time, Australia has reported over 400 cases. In fact, they reported 37 new cases across the country on Saturday, and the state of Victoria reported 75 cases today alone, with medical staff now going door-to-door testing people in areas where outbreaks have occurred. And, of course, our best wishes are with our colleagues in Australia as they continue their battle.

Globally, we are at 10 million cases, there have been 500,000 deaths, and the virus is, sadly, growing, not slowing. So it is not surprising that more and more New Zealanders are seeking to come home. That does mean some will bring the virus with them and into our managed facilities. It is unrealistic to think that we wouldn't have cases in that way, and that is exactly why we have these facilities in the first place.

But let's also not forget why they want to come home. We have freedoms that few other countries have. Our kids are playing weekend sport. Our bars and restaurants are open without restrictions. People are back at work. Professional rugby and netball are being played in front of enthusiastic crowds, and people can gather in any numbers they like. We can also travel anywhere we wish in our beautiful country. But many other places around the world cannot do these things. Oxford University says we have amongst the least restrictions of any country in the world, something that we are all working very hard to protect.

To stop the virus entering the community, we have strengthened our border defence arrangements. As we learn new information, we act on it. Yesterday, Minister Woods and Air Commodore Webb released the audit of the managed isolation quarantine system and the Government's actions in response. The audit report identified issues with personal protective equipment, PPE, and in particular the sometimes inconsistent use of it. We are moving quickly to act on those findings in the report.

Today, we are announcing an additional \$150 million allocation for the purchase of PPE from the COVID Response and Recovery Fund, with a firm focus on ensuring consistent supply and use for our front-line border, airline, and managed isolation and quarantine facility workers. This builds on the earlier investment of \$200 million in PPE announced in April. DHB infection control teams, as I understand, will be working with front-line staff at managed isolation and quarantine facilities in the safe and effective use of PPE, because, as many of you will have heard us discuss, that is key for PPE use being effective.

We will also be ensuring that Air New Zealand has access to supplies of facemasks for international passengers flying into the country. All returnees will also be required to wear masks when they disembark from the plane and travel to their isolation facility and whenever they leave their room and enter a common area or exercise area in managed isolation. And, again, PPE use has been in play. Our concern has been that it has not been consistent within our facilities, and that is what we are working to fix.

While we already have one of the strongest border quarantine systems in the world, we do not want to leave anything to chance. The latest investment means the health workers and those working as part of our border response can be confident they will have access to the PPE they need to stay safe and continue to keep COVID-19 out of our community. I have Minister Woods here available with me if there are additional questions on the findings of that audit or anything in regard to our managed isolation and quarantine facilities. But I'm now happy to take questions.

Media: Prime Minister, the Greens poverty action plan—what do you think of it?

PM: Well, look, as I've said this morning, in the same way that other parties will release policies, it's for them; it's not our party policy. We'll be releasing our own in coming weeks.

Media: Do you agree with Julie Anne Genter that this is what transformational Government really looks like?

PM: Well, my starting point would be that, actually, we do have common ground on increasing incomes and poverty reduction. But, actually, there has been significant progress made by this Government in that regard. The impact of the Families Package has been significant, particularly for families with children. We have continued to increase the minimum wage because of income adequacy issues. And we have been doing things like addressing the living wage within those directly employed by the Crown. So we have a common starting point, but we will often have very different views around how to achieve those goals.

Media: On the principle of broadening the tax system, though, do you agree with the principle of broadening it to things like wealth?

PM: Again, I will not be announcing Labour's tax policy today, but I will also be highlighting that, regardless of whether or not we've had a history of working with other parties, we still have separate policies, and we will still campaign separately come election time.

Media: Air Commodore Webb has floated this idea of the first three days of isolation keeping people in rooms, no exercise and stuff. What do you make of that idea? And also, second to that, PPE, how many masks does \$150 million buy?

PM: So PPE—of course, we're talking masks, gloves, and whatever else may be appropriate, particularly for those who are in closer proximity for the purposes of testing.

Now, those individuals already use PPE. This continues their ongoing supply of PPE. So it will vary depending on proximity with a returnee. I would need to get a break down on how many gloves, how many masks. Keep in mind, we do have domestic supply in New Zealand, but, of course, our demand has been significant. So that has meant that we have had to look beyond domestic production.

On the three days, yes, that is something that we have been looking at and perhaps Minister Woods would like to comment on that, but we are just looking at our ability to ask that of those that we are quarantining. So, essentially, it would mean someone wouldn't move from their room until they have that first test. Again, I would remind people, though, that first test is not a guarantee that all is well. So that's why we treat everyone as if they have COVID-19, in the way that they are treated within a facility.

Hon Dr Megan Woods: That's right. And Air Commodore Webb and Dr Bloomfield have started working together to see what can be done around that first three days and whether there is a way in which we can do that. But one of things that I think it's worth emphasising is that the six facilities that I've visited, it's not like people are just walking around at will. In fact, I've seen very few returnees. Most of the conversations that I've been having are with staff, because the clear expectation is that people are in their rooms anyway, that they're coming out for exercise. They're coming out for specific reasons. So it's not like people are just wandering around the facilities, but I know that both Dr Bloomfield and Air Commodore Webb are interested to see if we can put even more of a framework around that. But as the Prime Minister says, just receiving a negative test at day three is no certainty that you're COVID-free. We have had a test that tested negative at day three but positive at day 12. So those strict enforcement of the procedures of physical distancing, which is behaving like you have COVID, will still remain vitally important.

Media: It sounds like—

PM: We have a consumer in the room who wants to ask—Luke?

Media: What evidence—

PM: I can come back to you, Jo.

Media: Do you have evidence that there is COVID actually being spread within these facilities?

PM: No.

Media: Is wearing the masks actually a thing, or is this just a token waste of time to assuage, you know, people who are really worried about—

PM: A couple of points to make there. Look, on your first point, no, there has been no evidence to date that there has been transmission or people who have been picking up COVID from within facilities. And, of course, when we have had cases, we have gone through in some cases deliberately done testing through the wider facility to assure ourselves of that. That was the case for the two individuals that came from London.

So, no, but that does not mean that there aren't more things that we can do to give ourselves greater assurance that we have put in the highest level of protections in the area that is the greatest risk. So, you know, given that we have more individuals coming into New Zealand, more who are coming from high-risk areas, it makes sense that we continue to look at risk and reducing it as much as we can.

Jo, you had—you finished your question?

Media: Sorry, just on what you were both saying before, it sounds as though you're both talking down the merit of the three days of staying in your room and that, obviously, you may not test positive then but you might test positive later. So is it a bit of a time-wasting exercise?

PM: No, I don't think it's a matter of us talking it down, but demonstrating that we actually have to take a range of precautions. So staying in your room for the first three days, until you have a test—that's one form of precaution. But it does not mean that then once you have a test that we then treat you as if you're any less of a risk, because there is still a chance that despite that, you may then present with COVID further down the track. So they're all around adding layers of protection, in what is a very difficult virus to manage.

Media: Can you clarify at what point masks have to be worn—is it on flights, is it as soon as they hop off the plane; in the airport? When does that happen?

PM: So my understanding at the moment is that we're looking at flights, also transfers, because there's been inconsistent use with transfers; also use within the facilities when you're in common areas and when you are entering into exercise—again, areas where we've had inconsistent use.

Media: So if you're on a flight, you will be given a mask and you will have to wear it?

PM: Yes, and you'll also be given guidance from Air New Zealand around the appropriate application and use of a mask, because, as we've said, that's been an area where there has been concern that if you're not using it with adequate training—just a quick talk-through or a video—then it may not have the same use. So just making sure that you're removing it and applying it appropriately.

Media: Why is the Government supplying those masks on international flights? Why not have Air New Zealand supply those masks?

PM: Yeah, look, a good question. Firstly, we know that—so we're talking about supply for Air New Zealand. So, firstly, we want to ensure that they are being used. That is one way we can assure that. Secondly, we are a major shareholder in Air New Zealand, and our view is that this gives us an extra layer of safety, with an airline that we have a significant interest in. And, finally, we know that airlines are in difficult situations at present. We want no barrier to their use. We also have access through the bulk buying that we are doing. So this is an efficient way that we can provide that extra layer of security.

Media: Can you just confirm that passengers will have to wear them?

PM: So we are distributing them with the full expectation they be worn, or instructing people on their use. Whether or not we have the ability to legally enforce their use is another question. But it will be very clear the expectation is wearing them and Minister Woods has talked about whether or not people will be treated as compliant in the way that they are then transferred to different isolation facilities when they reach New Zealand.

Media: And you can then legally enforce their use within an isolation facility?

PM: Minister Woods?

Hon Dr Megan Woods: So if one of the procedures and policies that is in place at the isolation facility is a requirement to wear masks in certain areas or for certain activities, such as being transported or exercise, there does always remain the option of the penalties that exist. There's the ability for infringement fines and, ultimately, there is the penalty of a fine of up to \$4,000 or six months' imprisonment for failing to follow rules. Yeah.

Media: So just to clarify, that could come in as soon as you hop on the flight? You can—

Hon Dr Megan Woods: I'm talking about what happens within the managed isolation facilities and quarantine facilities. The flight is a different matter. The order covers the facilities.

Media: If these facilities are going to be around for months, years, is it only a matter of time until the Government begins charging people for staying there?

PM: Look, on the issue of co-payment, it is fair to say that that is a really complex area. There are legal questions that we have to answer, because, of course, these are New Zealand citizens who have the right to return to New Zealand. So that is going to take us

some time to work through. It's not something I have an immediate answer on, and we are going to move pretty cautiously in that area.

One thing that I would say is that I hope that we'll have an answer sooner rather than later, though, on whether or not charging could apply to those who are deciding—that are already in New Zealand and deciding that they will take a trip overseas with the expectation that they will have free quarantine on their return, because that, in my mind, is a very different decision. We have a number of New Zealanders who are coming home for a range of very significant and often dire circumstances. Someone who chooses to exit New Zealand will, on occasion, be in a very different situation, and I do think we should explore payment for them.

Media: There are 75 new cases of COVID in Victoria—75 new cases in the state. So do these numbers sort of change your thinking in regards to a trans-Tasman bubble? Has it delayed the prospect of a trans-Tasman bubble? Could it possibly force a rethink on whether you give it to the Pacific, who are literally begging New Zealand to open up to them in some cases?

PM: So I actually wouldn't characterise the conversations we've had with the Pacific in that way. The conversations I've had with Prime Minister Puna from the Cook Islands—I've spoken to Prime Minister Tuilaepa in recent times—actually, they want to move cautiously on behalf of their population. They have sometimes different perspectives within that, but that is a theme that I've heard.

Look, on the issue of Australia, actually, nothing from New Zealand's perspective has changed. We've always said we will not move to open a trans-Tasman bubble until we have reassurances that New Zealanders will be safe, so that has always been our view. We've set some criteria as a Cabinet around what the expectations are, and now, ultimately, it's up to Australia to decide whether or not they'll go for a whole-of-country approach or a state-by-state approach.

Media: So you're literally waiting for Australia to make that decision, and then—

PM: Yes, because that is, ultimately, a matter for them, and it would change potential timing. Obviously, where there is community outbreak, that is a no-go for New Zealand. Where they have border controls in place and where they've had no community transmission for sustained periods of time, then that may be a different scenario.

Media: And when Australia makes that decision, how quickly do you think you could move to open up the border?

PM: There is still work that needs to be done to make sure, for instance, that you have—because at the moment our flights are not trans-Tasman only; they're transit, often. So there'll be a mixture of people on those flights, and that would need to change. A number of things around the way our airports are accessed with passengers from different parts of the world—all that practical work is ongoing. So I wouldn't want to put a date on it, but it's fair to say that there's a bit of work still to be done.

Media: Todd Muller said today that it was untenable in the long-term for New Zealand to stay shut until, you know, other countries reached, sort of, our level of eliminating coronavirus or there was a vaccine, and New Zealand would be on its knees if it had to wait 12-18 months, which is the kind of time line he gave for that. Do you agree with that statement?

PM: I'd say it is untenable to consider the idea of opening up New Zealand's borders to COVID-19. And in some parts of the world where we have had frequent movement of people, they're not estimating that they will reach a peak for at least a month, or sometimes several months, so we will continue, on all estimates, to see COVID surge. Any suggestion of borders opening at this point, frankly, is dangerous, and I don't think we should put New Zealand in that position.

Media: Do you see the case for some kind of paid way that people that currently aren't allowed to come to New Zealand as tourists, or maybe business travellers, could prove that they were coronavirus-free, no matter where they were—maybe they were in Australia; maybe in the United States—and come then, or is that also off the table?

PM: Yeah, I mean, at this present point in time, our complete focus is ensuring the safety of New Zealanders while New Zealanders are returning home, and we have a large number of people—in fact, a growing number of people—in that category. So that's where our focus is. I won't rule out us further down the track, when we have capacity, thinking about alternative areas of focus, but that is not on our agenda currently.

Media: Do we have anything near the capacity to do something like that, on the [*Inaudible*] scale for essential workers?

PM: We are growing the capacity, keeping in mind we are, essentially, isolating or quarantining the equivalent, I believe, of Kerikeri at the moment. It is significant. It's been a significant increase in only the last two months, so our priority has to be managing that flow safely, prioritising those citizens and permanent residents. Once we make sure that we absolutely believe that that is well in train, then we can start thinking about others, but quarantine will remain part of that.

Media: Just back on the trans-Tasman bubble, I'm sure you appreciate as much as anyone the certainty that the tourism sector is desperate for. Is a bubble just simply unrealistic this year?

PM: No, I wouldn't say that, but as I say, so much does depend on some of the decisions that are, ultimately, for Australia. So, no, I wouldn't say unrealistic, but you can understand, of course, why New Zealand has a very high bar. We want to ensure that we maintain our status. We are making sacrifices, and I absolutely agree: those sacrifices are being most acutely felt by the tourism industry. That is why we have been putting in extra support in the likes of Queenstown and others, and that will have that rolling investment on an ongoing basis. Keep in mind, MYOB released a survey on Friday, I believe, demonstrating just how many New Zealanders intend to travel and, while I was in Queenstown, I met several couples who discussed the fact that they were meant to be overseas right now and instead they were experiencing New Zealand. So we shouldn't underestimate that impact.

Media: Is the Government anticipating an increased number of New Zealanders in Victoria to return to New Zealand because of the recent outbreak?

PM: Already—I mean, we haven't been undertaking specific modelling around specific states, but already, and we did anticipate this, we have had a significant percentage coming out of Australia. In part, that will be the fact that New Zealanders can't access the same regime of support and their support networks are in New Zealand, but that will be the case for others in the UK and the like as well.

Media: Just in terms of the testing, Dr Bloomfield said today that those two rounds of testing—day three and day 12—may not have been able to be done immediately when we moved to level 1 because it was a big exercise. Now, you said this morning on RNZ that it was not correct that we didn't have capacity and that we were able to do 12,000 tests a day. The review that came out yesterday said that the health sector said there wasn't the capacity to do it, and that was one of the failures in the system. I'm just trying to understand who's actually correct in all of this.

PM: Yeah, well, look, I think the point that probably the director-general and I have both made is that the expectation was there. So the expectation was there that it would be occurring in week 1 and week 2, and that was at the point that we moved to level 1. It was also at a point when we saw generally a decline in our testing within the community. As those numbers were coming down, we had an expectation that they would be ramping up within our facilities. I don't think Dr Bloomfield would be saying that as a rationale for why it didn't happen necessarily, because the expectation was there, but it is fair to say the audit

has raised some issues around the need to ramp up the capability to make sure we're getting in and undertaking those testing. But we have the testing capacity to process them.

Media: So when the review pointed out that the laboratories—they said; the review literally says that they did not have the capacity to do it. Is it less that and it's more the fact that the people in the facilities who were doing the testing hadn't taken on board what Dr Bloomfield had asked of them?

PM: Well, there is—obviously there was a disjunct there between the instructions that were coming from both the director-general and of course out of Cabinet and what was happening on the ground. But one of the things that did come through quite clearly within the report is making sure that we give ourselves enough of a buffer so that week 1 testing and that second week of testing—giving ourselves enough time for the processing so that it comes in before day 14. So making sure that, yes, we want it near the end, just as a clearance measure, but if you're only doing it precisely on day 13, you're expecting a 24-hour turn around. If you have any delay, people are then holding in longer in quarantine than they need to. So there are some things around capacity and testing we can do to lighten that load both for the testers but also our testing capacity.

Media: Because you could look at that and you could say, well, how do we know, moving forward, that as more ministerial or health sector bosses—whoever—make these decisions, is there actually checks that the operational can be achieved? Because if the review proved anything, it proved that there wasn't actually the question asked of the operational side of whether they could actually do it.

PM: A couple of things I'd bring you back to. We had the capacity at that time. So, on average, we were testing—oh, it would be thereabouts, if you're averaging it out, at about 2,000. We had, at that point, from memory, the capacity to undertake between 10,000 and 12,000 tests a day. So you can see why it wouldn't necessarily have been flagged as a capacity issue at that time. So that's the first thing, and we've built up that capacity, and we have the ability to do it. What we also need to make sure, though, as you say, is that when we're setting those standards, they're then able to be fulfilled on the ground. The Minister is seeking that reporting, a dashboard that will be coming through, that's looking into all of the expectations and whether or not they're being able to be met at the facilities. And she expects that that dashboard of reporting will start from this week. So that will give us that level of oversight as well.

Media: Do you have any enduring memories or parting words for Paula Bennett?

PM: Yeah, actually, I saw her departure today, and I saw that she did a little joint piece with Tom Sainsbury, which I think, you know, just demonstrates the spirit in which Paula's approached politics. You know, she's always had an ability in a very difficult environment, to keep her sense of humour. But she's also a very experienced person, and, obviously, I imagine, that will be felt as a loss within the National Party, given the level of experience that she has.

Media: Prime Minister, just back on the Greens poverty plan. Earlier today you said that there were some heroic assumptions underpinning the plan.

PM: Yeah.

Media: What are they?

PM: I'd put that down to—you always build in, obviously, assumptions around behaviour change, when you put in new expectations in the tax system. So some of the assumptions around people's change in behaviour, they aren't necessarily factoring in a significant behaviour change, which often tax amendments like this would drive. So that's the first thing, also the fact that people often will change the value of their assets in order to avoid tax—the fact that people will often move funds offshore. Also, I'm interested in the underlying modelling, which is not necessarily something I've had access to.

So, look, that's not to change the fact that they have a focus similar to ours when it comes to income adequacy and poverty issues. But, again, different approaches from different parties.

Media: Do you envisage some sort of fight with the Greens over the most competitive package for lower socioeconomic people?

PM: I would never characterise any of the debates that we have as a fight. You know, we do have similar starting points in wanting to ensure that we lift children out of poverty, that we improve income adequacy, but we'll often have different ideas on how to do that. And to your point, no, that's not what I'm saying. I'm saying that when you do model policies like this you do have to factor in behaviour change as a consequence.

Media: So you're open to a wealth tax, then?

PM: No, I'm also not saying that, Bernard. I've said we will be releasing our tax policy in the future. We're not doing that today. But if I've learnt anything from the work that has been done over a number of years in this Parliament, you do, in your modelling, have to build in some assumptions, reasonably significant, around behaviour change, because people inevitably try and avoid new taxes that are put in place. Yeah, so that I think probably is—that's why I said heroic assumptions.

Media: Minister Woods, have you got any new announcements around the number of hotels that have been brought on to increase capacity in the quarantine and managed isolation system?

Hon Dr Megan Woods: Well, what I can tell you is that today we have 4,873 beds occupied, out of a total capacity of 5,811. We're closely monitoring the ins and outflows and have that projected out in the fortnight. And, as the Prime Minister said, we'll be starting to release that daily dashboard later this week.

Media: And I think last week you said that seven new hotels were being brought on over the next fortnight. Is that still continuing?

Hon Dr Megan Woods: Yeah, so, I mean—and just to give you an illustration of how complex bringing this hotels on are, so the idea was to bring on a further hotel in Christchurch to do an air bridge from an Auckland arrival on Saturday evening. That couldn't occur because of fog. So there's a number of factors that we have to take in to place, as we're bringing these facilities on. So we do need to make sure that we've got inbuilt capacity within the system as well. That hotel will be receiving people today, I think.

Media: Prime Minister, just on the dashboard, what was the data that you were receiving before—we were talking last week about the issue of what was happening on the ground not being fed back to Ministers. What actually was the substance of the feedback that you were getting, which was obviously wrong?

PM: So we knew how many were in quarantine facilities. We knew how many were in the managed isolation facilities, so we had a breakdown between who was in which, keeping in mind, quarantine facilities hold people who are symptomatic, unwell, or who have tested positive. We knew, for instance, the incoming repatriations. We got ongoing reporting on that, so we had a knowledge of where extra pressure was coming in.

So keeping in mind that we were keeping an eye on also testing capacity, number of tests undertaken, breakdown of ethnicity on testing—so a range of things that we were constantly monitoring with COVID—

Media: And at no stage during that period did you get data on the number of people in isolation who actually were being tested? Did that number ever get fed back to Cabinet?

PM: Around how many were being tested? Well, of course—

Media: How many people in managed isolation and quarantine.

PM: Keeping in mind our expectation was, and what we were advised as part of that monitoring—in fact in the same dashboard—was that testing. So we had a testing number, and we had underneath that people were being tested at day three and day 12.

Media: So just on the issue of the large numbers of people coming back into the country from Australia and elsewhere, does the Government need to have some sort of rationing system, potentially using charges for quarantining and food to do that?

PM: Look, as you know, we've spoken about options around ensuring that people can come back, but we're just doing it in a way that we can anticipate our numbers, because at the moment we're dealing with passenger manifests once the doors of a flight close—and you can imagine how difficult, logistically, that makes it. So it's everything from the possibility of co-payments—although I don't see that as a way of managing demand per se, and I don't think it would be fair to see it as a tool for that. Whether or not you have a system that, basically, links in your accommodation with your flights—there's a range of options that we can look at that can make that logistical exercise a bit easier.

Media: Just on the tourism sector, I think a lot of tourism operators had seen the trans-Tasman bubble in July or August as kind of a last hope. I mean, what hope can you offer them now?

PM: Well, actually, from the conversations that I've had with operators, actually, some have talked about the period of time that they're able to continue to support their staff—the wage subsidy has made a big difference there. Larger operations know that, of course, within the \$400 billion there's that allocation for the strategic assets, and we're working through those, so those will be supported through the time at which our borders reopen. For the trans-Tasman bubble I also have very much had the message not to do anything that's considered unsafe because that could impact on our domestic tourism market, which does make up upwards of 60 percent. Some places—the Earnslaw down in Queenstown, 70 percent of their visitors using that experience are New Zealanders. So there is a balance to be struck: keep New Zealand safe, keep us moving around the country, bring on board others when it is safe to do so so we don't lose both options.

Media: So do operators need to pivot from an international market to a domestic market? Because, I mean, a lot of them have a price point that New Zealanders aren't going to be willing to pay.

PM: Yeah, and, look, I actually think most have accepted that the pivot to the domestic market is really important. There are some operators that are so focused on international and offer experiences that they just don't believe New Zealanders will necessarily pay for that they are thinking about alternatives—could they become part of an education experience within our education system? So they are already trying to do that work. We have been careful not to put a date on the trans-Tasman bubble because there is uncertainty, but we also want to make sure that the last thing that we do is jeopardise domestic tourism.

Media: What are the most up-to-date figures you have on the number of Kiwis who have left and then returned through the free isolation?

PM: Who have left New Zealand—

Media: Yeah, only the ones—

PM: Oh, I don't. I don't, no. That's not something I have a breakdown on, but, obviously, as I say, that's something I've asked questions over, so I imagine I'll get that breakdown over the coming days.

Media: Realistically, how quickly could you, sort of, get that co-payment in place for those people who have left and come back?

PM: Yeah. And, again, the question has to be asked over whether you have the same legal issues as you do for returning New Zealanders who have been offshore for some

time, so that's something that I've asked. One message I'm sending clearly to New Zealanders, though: for anyone who may be considering a non-essential trip, we will be looking at whether or not you end up being charged on your return, because you have choices. I accept that some will have essential reasons, but for others who might be looking at the school holidays, it's just not fair to expect New Zealanders to pick up the tab on that.

Media: Surely they have the same legal right as people who have been overseas for a while to come back, though—the inalienable right to come back to New Zealand?

PM: My view is that if you're making a choice to go on a holiday offshore with the expectation that taxpayers pick up the tab on your return, it's right for us to look at whether or not we can deal with that, because not only does that put extra pressure on our system for New Zealanders who need to come home; you actually have a choice of whether you leave or not.

Media: Does that change the legal map at all, because the legal problem is the problem here, isn't it?

PM: Yeah, and so, again, you know, this—I'm speaking openly here about something that is still being tested over whether or not it is possible to do it. But my strong view on a fairness question is that there are people in different circumstances; what we're seeing is whether or not we can legally account for those different circumstances. Jo.

Media: Those 300 or so—

PM: I'll just take the last couple of questions, too, everyone. Sorry, Jo.

Media: Those 300 or so people that the Ministry of Health still hasn't managed to track down yet—

PM: Well, they've tracked but have not made contact.

Media: So Ashley Bloomfield said today that that number is still outstanding because of phone numbers [*Inaudible*] whatever. What does that say about the country's so-called gold standard, given it's been since 16 June now?

PM: Again, my understanding is that, for that number, they are people that have received text messages and repeated phone calls but are not responding, replying, or picking up. So that's for that very particular group. That is the circumstances there. Now, keep in mind, if we had a situation where it was a community case and we were doing contact tracing of community cases, at that point, you send people out, you knock on doors, you take a very direct approach. For this group, they've undergone 14 days of isolation, they had a medical check before departure, so they are in a bit of a different category.

Media: So they should be let go, basically?

PM: Well, you have to keep in mind that, of course, not only have they already done their 14 days' quarantine, which in some countries is all that's required, also a period of time has also passed as well. OK. We'll take the last couple.

Media: Are you receiving a daily update yet on those day three and 12 tests—how many they should have done, how many are being done?

PM: We have overall numbers. You know, when I last looked at them last week, we had over 5,000 that had been undertaken and the assurance that those tests are now—there or thereabouts—around the three day, around the day 12 are being undertaken.

Media: There or thereabouts?

PM: As in, some days it might be on day 4 or it might be moved earlier to make sure that you can process it in time for people's release. Week one, week two.

Media: Prime Minister, do you have any sort of security concern over the presence of National's MP Jian Yang in the New Zealand Parliament given his connections?

PM: In what regard?

Media: On Q+A yesterday, the Asia editor of the *Financial Times* says his presence made New Zealand “a global laughing stock” and “a source of bewilderment” amongst Five Eyes members.

PM: I see issues of membership of other political parties ultimately for the leader of those parties.

Media: And what about his connections within Parliament?

PM: Again, ultimately, those are matters entirely for the Leader of the Opposition. It's not for me to manage who enters on to the National Party List. That is a matter for Mr Muller. OK. Last question.

Media: Has there been thought given to giving towns or cities a heads up when new facilities are going to be opened there? That happened last week in Rotorua. Some people kind of felt blindsided that they didn't know there was a hotel opening up there.

Hon Dr Megan Woods: Yes. So one of the pieces of work that we started undertaking last week was around some of that stakeholder engagement, in particular places. So last Wednesday, I think it was, Air Commodore Webb and I visited Rotorua and visited a number of the local community leaders and talked through any concerns that they might have. On Friday, we met with leaders in Christchurch about the facilities there. It is our intention to keep engaging with communities on a local basis if we do need to open up new facilities.

PM: Thank you, everyone.

conclusion of press conference