

**POST-CABINET PRESS CONFERENCE: MONDAY, 7 DECEMBER 2020
HANSARD TRANSCRIPT**

PM: Kia ora koutou katoa and good afternoon. Starting with the week ahead, tonight I will attend the Diwali celebrations here at Parliament and will be in Wellington on Tuesday for the House. On Wednesday, one year on from the 2019 Whakaari / White Island eruption, I will be in Whakātane to be with Te Rūnanga o Ngāti Awa as we remember the lives lost and acknowledge the efforts of many during the tragedy.

On Thursday, I head to Rotorua to launch Tāiki Whānau alongside Ministers Little and Verrall. This pilot is something I'm really excited to be a part of. In Budget 2019, we allocated \$10 million over three years to test and evaluate enhanced models of support for parents and their whānau and mental wellbeing needs for new parents. Tāiki Whānau, provided by Manaaki Ora Tipu Ora, is the first Well Child / Tamariki Ora programme of its kind to be established, and will support between 40 to 60 young parents and their whānau over three years, from early in the pregnancy to up to two years. Those taking part will receive intensive whānau-led mental and social wellbeing support, led by an appropriate care worker, who will work in collaboration with other health and community agencies, as needed.

This programme is based loosely on what is internationally known as nurse-family partnerships. Several years ago, a nurse with Plunket in the Hawke's Bay first piloted the idea of nurse-family partnerships in New Zealand. The focus is, of course, using a Tamariki Ora or Plunket approach, but scaled up, having a nurse more frequently in contact with a family for a longer period of time, and with the ability to look beyond health needs to needs across everything from family violence to housing, to other social and mental health needs. To see us getting on with rolling out an extended version of that model is something, as you can see, I'm very enthusiastic about.

And on Friday, I will travel to the Manawatū for the sod-turning of the Manawatū Tararua Highway. This project is a further example of the Government's strong focus on infrastructure and accelerating the recovery from the economic impacts of COVID-19.

Tomorrow, the report from the royal commission of inquiry into the terrorist attacks on March 15 will be tabled in Parliament. When we announced the terms of reference for the inquiry, the intent was very clear: we wanted to ensure that if there were any failings by Government agencies—if there was anything that could have been done to prevent the attacks—that we identified them and that we learnt from them. This is an 800-page report. It is comprehensive but also, for many, it will be very difficult, because by its very nature it revisits the events of that day and what happened leading up to it. I just want to acknowledge that, therefore, it will be a difficult few weeks for many.

Cabinet met today, and as part of the tabling process the Government will release some very initial responses to the findings and recommendations of the royal commission's report, but, as you can appreciate, it won't be a report to everything in its entirety. Some of the recommendations will take a longer period of time for us to develop a response to. Of course, though, you'll see from the way that we will be releasing and tabling the report tomorrow we are allowing plenty of time for media, with an embargoed lock-up and the availability of Ministers and some agency leads tomorrow to answer questions before that public release at 2 p.m.

But for now I'm happy to take questions.

Media: So can we expect to see major changes come from the recommendations in that report?

PM: Well, as you can imagine, a report that's taken this length of time for an event that was as significant as March 15—it is a very comprehensive report. And it does span—the recommendations span across a number of areas. They don't just relate, for instance, to our

security and intelligence agencies, and so it will take some time for us to be able to implement some of the findings. However, some we will be able to move on quite quickly.

Media: Will you be apologising to the Muslim community for the mistakes and failures made by the Government?

PM: You'll appreciate that any response to the report I'd want to leave until we can actually share it with you publicly. That will enable us to give a bit of context to our response, but it'll be much easier for us to do that once you can see the report for yourselves.

Media: Will you be appointing a Minister responsible for the royal commission report?

PM: Well, one thing I have said to the community—the Muslim community—when we met yesterday was that I absolutely appreciate the community will want to see accountability in terms of the implementation. They will want to know who has responsibility for coordinating some of those efforts, and we will be providing that.

Media: You said on the election campaign that you wanted hate speech laws changed. Are you expecting to make an announcement about that tomorrow?

PM: Yes, we did, because, of course, that's been something that the Human Rights Commission has recommended for some time, and March 15 has, again, identified that there are gaps currently. So we do already have provisions, but they just don't cover everyone in the sense that you don't, for instance, have religion covered, and, of course, there are members of our LGBTIQ community who have also raised the gaps in our existing legislation. It is fair to say that that's something that we of course need to consider in responding to the report.

Media: When you say that it'll be some time before the full response, what do you mean by that?

PM: Simply that there are some recommendations that we have already done some preliminary work on—simply, we anticipated that they're likely to be raised. For instance, you already know that we identified issues around hate crimes, as an example. There are others, of course, where we needed the royal commission to complete its work to have a full understanding of where they recommended changes to be made. We won't necessarily be able to implement or provide an implementation plan after only seven days with the report. So that's what I mean by some will just take a little longer. *[Interruption]*

PM: Sorry, what was that?

Media: Could that be further changes to firearms laws?

PM: Oh look, I make that as a general point, but it is fair to say that we will give you an indication of our views across all of the recommendations tomorrow, even if the time line for implementation might take a little longer.

Media: Back to Tova's question, when you say you'd like someone responsible—sorry, that the community wants to see someone responsible for the response. Would that be a—

PM: Implementation, yeah.

Media: Would that be a Minister or a commissioner, or what sort of person?

PM: We will look to be having a coordinating Minister. And so of course, as you would expect for something of this magnitude, the scope of Ministers involved is not limited to one—there are multiple who will need to be involved. But, as you would expect, in order to make sure that we are both reporting back to the community frequently about progress, reporting to the public to make sure that we are delivering against the recommendations, I will be appointing a coordinating Minister.

Media: Who will that be?

PM: I will be delivering on that tomorrow.

Ah, Barry.

Media: There seems to be growing calls for some sort of inquiry into Whakaari / White Island. Have you absolutely ruled that out?

PM: Oh look, I haven't absolutely ruled it out, because there are still elements of the response to come. I understand, of course, that people recognise that the WorkSafe investigations are taking into account events leading up to the eruption. The coronial process does allow for some coverage of events post the eruption as well, but I think it would be remiss of us not to have those reports, that process, complete before we make any decision about whether or not there was a gap that needs to be filled.

Media: WorkSafe, of course, carries out the audits—

PM: Yep.

Media: —of all the tourism that goes on at Whakaari / White Island.

PM: Yes.

Media: You said last week that MBIE was looking at that, looking at whether there should be an inquiry into—well, not an inquiry, but—

PM: Well, just whether they fulfilled their obligations—yep.

Media: —an investigation into the work that was done by WorkSafe New Zealand. How far is that along?

PM: So, yes, as Minister Wood identified, that rightly we need to have an appreciation of whether or not the inspector did its job, and so he has written to MBIE, asked them that question, asked for those assurances. I would need to check within around his time frames from MBIE as to when they'll be able to fulfil that request from him. What we're also waiting on from MBIE is that work around the adventure tourism regulations and just that broader regulatory environment. You'll remember that some years ago that changed after we had number of deaths that related to adventure tourism, so we're just doing another check, based on what we've learnt from Whakaari, as to whether or not that framework is still doing its job.

Media: On Whakaari, Prime Minister, this was an international tragedy, yet New Zealand is very closed off from the world—understandably so at the moment. What's your message to the Australian families and so many families who won't be able to be in New Zealand for this anniversary?

PM: Now, this is one of the devastating effects of COVID—that we have, you know, commemorations of significant impact in New Zealand but also globally that haven't been able to be marked in the way they usually would. Whakaari / White Island is one of them. March 15 was equally affected by limitations on gatherings. What we've seen locally, though, is a real focus on—whilst there's an in-person gathering, it's also been very focused around how a wider group of people can participate, both in Whakatāne but also globally. And so I hope people will feel a connection to those events, but I'd want them to know that particularly those from Australia will be in our thoughts this week, too.

Media: Can I also ask, what is your sense of the local community, Whakatāne—how the town is doing after that event, because, obviously, there's the trauma suffered during the event but also the economic hit with such a mainstay—

PM: Yeah.

Media: —for that economy.

PM: I know this is something that, locally, Kiri Allan, of course, has been very focused on—you know, just the sense on the ground from the community. As you can imagine, these things aren't static, and I think we would expect that at the point of an anniversary, these things, you know, become—what is already a deeply traumatic event is revisited, and I think there's an expectation that that may well be the case this week. At the same time, of course, you're right to point out the economic hit that the community have taken, both by Whakaari / White Island but also, just generally, the tourism in the area. Through various funding

channels there has been support for projects that will in the long run create economic and employment opportunities in the region, particularly around the harbour. So we have actively, as a Government, looked to invest in opportunities that will build a bit more resilience into the different employment opportunities there.

Media: With the Whakaari anniversary this week and then the March 15 royal commission report out tomorrow, is this week to have a lot of heartache for New Zealand?

PM: Yes—yes, it is.

Media: And what is your message to New Zealanders, both here and further afield?

PM: Yeah. I think we all know the last three years have been particularly tough for New Zealand. As we come into that holiday period, we have this period of time right now where we're being reminded of that. You know, in one week, to have a comprehensive report that really does revisit March 15, but also the anniversary of Whakaari—that will be tough for a lot of people. But it's also a reminder, though, of the response that New Zealand provided at those times. This is—particularly March 15—a part of what we need to do, though, to make sure that we learn from this event, and we cannot deny the opportunity for New Zealand to make sure that we learn from this horrific event.

Media: How do you feel ahead of this week?

PM: Oh, I have to say, I have found reading the royal commission tough, and that was a message I shared with the community—if I've found it tough, I can only imagine how distressing they will find it, and I'm very mindful of that. And that's why we owe it to the community to make sure that they're not going through this for nothing.

Media: What will the Government do to close the Pacific pay gap in the public sector?

PM: Well, this is obviously an issue—if we look both at the experience of women but also other groups within our workforce, we have a pay gap that needs to be overcome. We've really placed an obligation on the public sector to lead by example, and so, of course, the first thing we need is that transparency—so, better reporting—so that we have departments aware of where they have those issues.

Media: Will you write targeted strategies into the national action plan against racism?

PM: Well, look, it's fair to say I wouldn't mind—I mean, this is an issue, regardless of whether you're looking at pay, employment, the number of people we have from different ethnicities represented in our Public Service—this is an area where we have a lot of work to do. In fact, you'll see us probably talking about this in a bit more detail tomorrow. If we want to make sure, though, that we do our job as a public sector and as Government to roll out policies that support all New Zealanders, we need better representation in our Public Service, and we need those individuals to be treated fairly when they're there.

Media: Just on pay equity—

Media: It'll take 120—

PM: I'll let you finish your question—yeah.

Media: It'll take 120 years for Pacific women to reach pay equity with Pākehā men. Is that good enough?

PM: No—no, it's not. But nor do we think a persistent pay gap, generally, is good enough. It is absolutely fair to say there's a lot of work to do.

Media: On pay equity, would you envisage any sort of pay equity deals on Pacific and Māori communities like we saw with the women's pay equity deals?

PM: That's not something that Cabinet has considered. However, it's equally fair to say we don't think it's—it is not right to see pay deals—sorry—pay issues that relate to ethnicity or gender. And so, first, we have to identify where that's occurring and make sure that we are targeting those areas where we have those greatest pay gaps. You have seen, as a

Government we have tried to prioritise those areas where we had persistently low wages for workers in those areas—so we've looked for clerical workers, teacher-aides, and, of course, those other areas where women have predominantly made up those workforces as well. But we need to continue to work through those issues.

Media: The last Government was sort of forced into it through the courts. Would you look to pre-empt, you know, some sort of—

PM: I'd like to think you can see that we are trying to pre-empt that already.

Yeah, just—I'll come to you, Jason.

Media: Oh, the National Party are being critical of the Government—especially the health select committee, which is dominated by Labour members—saying that they voted not to do an inquiry into Pharmac, or at least pushed it out into a later date. Is that inquiry still on the cards at this stage?

PM: Yeah, look, I think, actually, the rationale for that was perfectly reasonable. You know, there are some issues that are important enough that they shouldn't necessarily be left to a select committee process, which can sometimes be quite drawn out. Yes, it is cross-party, but, actually, we have taken ownership of this as Government. I pledged during the election campaign that we would undertake this inquiry into Pharmac, and we will. So it made no sense to leave that to the select committee when we've already said that it's something that needs to be done by us.

Media: Could we get a sense of a time line when that could be done?

PM: I've already flagged it with officials that it needs to be on the work programme for Health, but I'll need to provide you with an update. But it's something that as soon as we came in—I believe even before we swore in Government—I indicated we needed to progress.

Media: Your live videos are being used in a scam on Facebook at the moment—

PM: Yeah, I've seen that.

Media: —to try and get people to hand over their bank account details—

PM: Mm.

Media: I mean, obviously, you've seen it yourself. What is your response to that—is your office doing something?

PM: Unfortunately, I, like many other New Zealanders, have found that fake accounts have been set up and in some cases fake Facebook Lives have been produced. We have raised, any time we've seen these fake accounts, directly with Facebook that issue. We've had a number of these accounts removed, I understand, as a result. But my message to New Zealanders, actually, generally would be, firstly, always look for a blue tick—some kind of authentication the actual account you've following is real and genuine—and, secondly, you can be assured that I do not—and actually, cannot—ask on behalf of charities or organisations online, based on the *Cabinet Manual*, for people to hand over money. So if you see that online in Facebook Lives, you can be assured that that is not real.

Media: And a message to the scammers?

PM: Oh, to the scammers? You know, there's not really words I can use that are polite. You know, I think people who prey online in this way, who use false messages to deceive people, are rotten to the core.

Media: Just on scammers, what do you make of this \$100,000 cash grab thing that happened in Auckland over the weekend?

PM: Yeah, I've seen some of the reporting around that, some of the impacts on people who have been a part of it. I cannot fathom how at any point someone would think that that was a good idea. Clearly, it was not, and it's caused harm, it's caused hurt. They should apologise.

Media: In terms of accountability following the Christchurch royal commission, will anyone lose their jobs off the back of the report?

PM: Again, these are questions that are very difficult for me to give you answers without the context of the report to be able to refer to. So tomorrow afternoon, these are all questions I will be very happy to respond to, but it will help if you have the report first.

Media: Presumably, any measures as extreme as that would already be in train, though, after you and the Government saw the report?

PM: As I say, these are things I would very happily respond to tomorrow, but it would be preferable if you have the report in front of you and then I can get into some specifics with you.

Media: The House will tomorrow consider a number of motions on the sort of COVID-19 response. What will these motions look to achieve?

PM: Oh, you know, look, these are—very much all the way through our response you've seen that we've tried to learn from our escalation up alert levels and our de-escalation from alert levels, and it's been clear that there are some things that we could do to smooth that path. So, for instance, you will know that we often had to 48 hours' notice for a change in alert levels. That makes a lot of sense when you're moving up; it doesn't make a lot of sense when you're moving down alert levels. So just taking those learnings and implementing changes as a result.

Media: Prime Minister, on other COVID preparations, how close might we be now on the Google's Apple app, Bluetooth connection and tracing, and are we any closer to any changes at all on the length, for example, of MIQ stays?

PM: Yeah. So to answer the first question, we, of course, have continued to do work on the technological tools that we have that will support our contact tracing. Health have continued work to use, for instance, Bluetooth as a way to identify when you've been in close proximity to a known case. That's something that I expect Minister Hipkins to give you a time frame around the roll-out of in short order, but it is fair to say we've wanted to do the work to make sure that when we do release it, we are very clear on its functionality within our current app and the impacts of its use by New Zealanders alongside our current app. But he'll give you an indication—and fairly shortly—around its roll-out.

Media: Prime Minister, tomorrow a liveable incomes campaign is going to picket your electorate office and outside Parliament on the issue. It's an issue that this Government—

PM: On the what, sorry?

Media: On liveable incomes. It's an issue this Government can't seem to shake. There was a very vigorous back and forth between you and John Campbell this morning—

PM: I wouldn't want to shake it.

Media: No? I—

PM: It's one of the most important debates you could have.

Media: OK. Campaigners are certainly still very critical of what this Government's done. Given you're a consensus builder by nature, how can you build consensus in this area—

PM: Oh—

Media: —because it's so—it is very fraught.

PM: Look, actually, I don't know that it is. You know, ultimately, around the principle of ensuring that people have adequate incomes, there is agreement. What you're seeing debate or discussion around, or protest around, is speed, and it's our job, as the Government, to make sure that what we do we can sustain and that we create that lasting change. Now, what you'll hear me rigorously defend is the amount that we did in the last term of office, but you'll never hear me say that it was sufficient. We have a goal, for instance, to halve child poverty.

That means we must keep making progress on these issues, but what I am very determined to do is make sure that it is sustained progress.

Media: Has New Zealand decided which candidate it will support to head up the OECD?

PM: We've discussed it, but we haven't announced it. We will need to do that shortly, though. So I'll make sure that we do that before the end of the year.

Media: Iconic Wellington café Astoria has announced that it's closing down today. It'd ask you to reflect on your favourite Astoria—

PM: Oh!

Media: Oh, sorry—I didn't mean to—

PM: Break it to me gently, Jason!

Media: Sorry—sorry. What's your favourite Astoria memory, if you have one?

PM: Do people have favourite Astoria memories? Look, I mean, I cannot remember a time that I have gone into Astoria when there hasn't been someone that I've known sitting in there already. You know, it is an institution, and for good reason—you know, a fabulous place for people to congregate because really nice people work there. They always made you feel welcome, even if you've queued at the wrong counter.

Media: The CTV families' group have express some frustration that they have yet to hear back from you in regards to their letter that they sent.

PM: Yeah, I actually—I received—so I got a physical copy of the letter over the weekend. So forgive me if it had been with me longer, but that's when I received it, and after receiving a little bit of advice, I'm just now crafting a response to them.

Media: What do you make of their argument for a review into the police?

PM: If you wouldn't mind, I'd rather communicate that with them directly first, rather than via you—forgive me. Not that, I'm sure, you wouldn't have shared it in a polite way.

Media: To just go back to that COVID question, is the Government—

PM: Oh yes, your second half of the question.

Media: —giving any consideration to shorter MIQ?

PM: Yeah, well, look, what we have to factor in is that any change to the length of stay, for instance, would require a reconfiguration of our facilities. You wouldn't want people with shortened stays being necessarily in the same facility as people that were higher risk, because, by virtue—by its very nature, a shortened stay indicates that you've got someone from a low-risk country, so we would need, therefore, to have those separate facilities set up. So it's something that we have discussed the possibility of, but have not made any final decisions around, keeping in mind that, actually, our ultimate goal is still quarantine-free travel, and that is something that we want to conclude some of the time frames around as soon as we can.

Media: On those isolation facilities—*[Interruption]*

PM: I'll come to you, and then I'll come to Dom.

Media: On those isolation facilities, with, obviously, Darryn Webb stepping down and moving into this new phase, what can we expect from this new phase? Will there be—

PM: He will then be replaced by someone else. So it continues.

Media: So no changes to the actual facilities themselves—

PM: No.

Media: —the rules, or anything—

PM: No.

Media: He's just physically replaced?

PM: Yep. He's just moving on. He's done, can I—I mean, this is an opportunity for me just to point out that he has done an exceptional job. You know, I visited at the end of last week an exhibition that's been put on to capture some of the feedback that has come through from those who have been through isolation. We've got—if my memory's correct—over 80,000 people, now, who have gone through our managed isolation facilities, and the feedback that they provide the workforce who are looking after them, be it through their lunch bags, notes under the door to staff—because it's the only way they can communicate—is exceptional to see, the gratitude that exists. So I have heard horrific stories around the treatment that outside of their day-to-day work our border force are treated. Some of them are ostracised from their community groups, some of them are treated as though they're unsafe to be around, and yet here they are, doing an exceptionally important job for us, so my message to both Commodore Webb and to every single person who works in our managed isolation facilities: we owe you a debt of gratitude. You're doing a job for returning Kiwis that we couldn't respond to COVID without.

Media: The New Zealand Super Fund has expressed an interest in owning and running some parts of New Zealand's three waters network and other sort of infrastructure projects. Is that something that you would personally support—sort of a quasi-public privatisation of water?

PM: Look, I am not going to jump into that hornet's nest today. What has been most important for us to prioritise as a Government has actually been a partnership with local government to support them in the funding of the three waters infrastructure that their communities require. So that has been our focus; I'm definitely not going to get into wider ownership issues.

Media: Fair enough. But the MOU between local government and the central government—

PM: Yes.

Media: —said that you both wanted to keep water ownership in public hands.

PM: Yes—correct.

Media: Would you consider the Super Fund—would that still count as public to you, or is that borderline?

PM: Again, bottom line for us, that public ownership—I mean, we're coming here to the critical infrastructure of water provision. I am not going to enter into a hypothetical around whether or not the Super Fund would fall into that definition.

Media: Looking back on the year that's been, what has COVID-19 taught you about governance?

PM: That you are never ever alone. When I think about the extraordinary ask that we had of New Zealand at the beginning of COVID-19, the idea that you, in a space of a very short period of time, could shut down an entire economy, would almost have been unfathomable. The idea that you could simply make that so in such a short turnaround, that came down to leadership from local government, leadership by our community groups and agencies, leadership from neighbourhood networks—New Zealanders made the lockdown work. So sometimes we need to have faith that if you have a plan that actually involves being operationalised by those within and outside of Government, have faith that you can make it work.

Media: So do you feel like it taught you anything personally, as well?

PM: Well, I found that quite a personal reflection as well. Taught me personally? Just take every—just one day at a time. Take every day as it comes.

Media: What made New Zealand different in this way, in going into lockdown so hard, when just about every other Western democracy couldn't do it?

PM: I don't know how many necessarily decided that they would to the degree that we did, and we did that based on the information we had in front of us. We knew that we had a significant proportion of people returning from high-risk areas, that we already had had them return from high-risk areas, that the success of that isolation process at home still posed risk, that we had a population that had particular vulnerabilities that we were very aware of, and, actually, we made a decision that the best response for our economy was to have the best possible response in terms of health. So we were very deliberate in what we did, and that meant going hard and early, and that was an approach we adopted that not everyone did.

Media: Back to the royal commission, some of the families affected who live outside of Christchurch and overseas have been quite upset that they won't be able to see the report before it's made public. Were any efforts made to try and show them an advance copy, or was it logistically too difficult?

PM: We certainly discussed this issue. Of course, our preference would have been to be able to—to make sure that everyone was treated in the same way. However, what we wanted to do was also make sure that we limited the chance of it going beyond those directly affected. So the decision was made that we would provide it in person to those who had lost loved ones and those who were bullet-injured. For those who were witnesses, which was a group of over 200, we physically read the findings to them so they know the findings and absolutely know generally what to expect from the release of the report.

For those offshore, that, unfortunately, was much, much harder. It is fairly unprecedented to share a royal commission in advance, this far, with anyone, let alone at the scale we've shared it, but I stand by it as being the right thing to do, even if it wasn't perfect.

Media: We pointed out before that the next few weeks for those families and those affected is going to be really difficult. Has the Government set up any support, or will there be—

PM: Yes.

Media: —I guess, what's in place to support those people affected over the next few weeks?

PM: Yes, and so even for our meetings yesterday, we had Government agencies and community-based support, mental health support, available, and we'll continue to make sure that we're making that available. You'll also see in some of our response tomorrow our expectations around just providing that ongoing pastoral care.

Media: Are there any parts of the report that you disagree with, or the Government takes issue with, or do you accept it in its entirety?

PM: If you wouldn't mind, I wouldn't mind providing that response tomorrow. That really gets to the heart of what we as a Government will do with the findings.

Yes—Richard.

Media: Business New Zealand's put out a survey of responses from business to the way the border's being managed. Sixty-one percent of respondents said the border closure was making it difficult to retain international workers, with stress about pending visa expiries and stand-downs, and family separation of international workers. Is the Government willing to get into a dialogue with business about changing some of the things in the border, particularly what appears to be a real shortage of places in MIQ?

PM: Well, we've actually continued that dialogue all the way through, and so that's never stopped. And, for the most part, the feedback I've had is that, you know, the business community absolutely understands the rationale for our strategy around the border; the tension has simply been the proportion of places that are available for economic reasons versus a significant demand for New Zealanders to return home.

Media: And have you seen the report from the Hawke's Bay today about Johnny Bostock, the apple grower who says he put in, what was it, 277—he got 277 applications and only 55 of the Kiwi workers turned up, and he's worried that he's not going to be able to get the New Zealand workers.

PM: Well, you would actually equally have seen that down in the ODT, they've got—they were reporting that there were so many applications for growers, orchardists, in that region that they were struggling to process them, and MSD is now providing support. And so some different examples—actually, what I found is the Hawke's Bay have been extraordinary in their organisation they've put in as a region to support the relocation of workers into the region. We of course have had these issues for some time, and the response I got out of the Hawke's Bay is that there is a bit of a view that we can manage until through to about March, when things start getting more difficult across the board for horticulture, which is when those 2,000 RSE workers are due to be available.

I'll take the last couple—yeah.

Media: The early stages of the vaccine roll-out in New Zealand are not going to provide us with herd immunity; they're going to—it is what the Government has said. They're going to vaccinate this smaller proportion of the population. Are you concerned that in those early stages of the roll-out, before we have herd immunity, there will be a large push for something like opening the borders now that the vaccine is here?

PM: I think the most important message I could share is, for our immunisation programme—indeed, for the world, in terms of immunisation—the most important thing won't be the date in which a country starts; it will be the date they finish, because that will be the point when we really can start changing some of the things that have been required to keep everybody safe. No country is going to finish their immunisation programme in the first part of 2021. Everyone is looking to similar time frames for when they'll finish.

Media: So are you saying the border won't open until we've got total—

PM: No—not necessarily. Of course, what will be material is what the evidence in clinical trials will demonstrate around the level of transmission that you may or may not have amongst those who are vaccinated. So a vaccine, of course, prevents feeling the effects or suffering the effects of the disease—it stops you becoming very unwell—but we're still waiting for the data that demonstrates what it does for transmission between people. So those are the two factors that are important: when will countries be able to broadly immunise their population, but, equally, would you have a situation where a vaccine means that you are no longer a risk, because that equally could affect borders.

Media: When it comes to house prices, is sustained moderation—

PM: OK. I'll take you as my last question, Jenna.

Media: Thank you. When it comes to house prices, is sustained moderation still the Government's goal, and, if so, why?

PM: Essentially, we want people's incomes to be able to keep pace. You know, we saw in 2018 a situation where wages were finally outstripping house price growth, and so, of course, that has impacts on issues like affordability. At the same time, CoreLogic has suggested that our annualised house price growth of our last Government was around 4 percent. We've recently, of course, seen that growth grow considerably in a very short space of time. So it's all about, you know, that relative growth—whether or not people's incomes are keeping pace—because that affects affordability.

Media: So they aren't—so is sustained moderation still the goal?

PM: Yes. We don't want to see the significant increases, these huge jumps, in house price growth. It means that it becomes out of reach for people as their incomes or their wage growth doesn't keep pace.

Media: Why would falls be an absolutely terrible thing? Why would a fall in house prices—can you just explain why that would be a bad thing?

PM: Oh, look, what we simply expressed here is that the growth that we're seeing is just unsustainable, and so, if anything—look, it is much more sustainable to have those much smaller increases. I think people expect that you see that in the market. What we also accept is that for most New Zealanders, their house is their most significant asset. So if you see, for instance—as was predicted at the beginning of the year—a significant crash in the housing market, that impacts, of course, people's most significant asset.

Media: But just—sorry, one more thing. When I—

PM: Your one question!

Media: —go to buy shares, I don't expect that they will always increase. That's the part of—if you do an investment, they go up and they go down, so why—

PM: And you have got into the heart of the issue.

Media: Why is it different for housing?

PM: This gets to the heart of the issue of why so many New Zealanders turn to the housing market. Thanks.

conclusion of press conference