

# Noting Paper: COVID-19

## Border Measures Update

**To:** Ad Hoc Cabinet Committee on COVID-19 Response

**From:** Hon Dr David Clark, Minister of Health

**Date:** 24 March 2020

**Security level:** IN CONFIDENCE

### Purpose

1. This paper provides a public health perspective on the paper 'Additional border control measures for self-isolation of international arrivals' in the context of New Zealand moving to level 4.

### Comment

- s 9(2)(b)(ii)
- [REDACTED]
3. Public health officials assess that all people arriving from jurisdictions outside the Pacific carry a very high risk of recent COVID-19 infection due to the high prevalence of uncontained community transmission in most parts of the world.
  4. To illustrate the risk, an international flight of 400 passengers arrived in Auckland today. 50 passengers were referred to temperature screening on the basis of health assessment. Of these, 35 met the clinical criteria for being swabbed for COVID-19. (Results are still pending.)
  5. Of the current cases in New Zealand 100/102 have been associated with international travel.
  6. The recent policy decision to move to level 4 restrictions on Wednesday 25 March was made in order to break transmission and flatten the curve. Health officials assess that allowing a large number of people from high risk areas to enter New Zealand will inevitably result in a substantial increase of COVID-19 positive cases. This will materially set back current efforts to break transmission and flatten the curve, through further spread into the community.

■ s 9(2)(g)(i)

[REDACTED]

s 9(2)(g)(i)

8. Options for managing upcoming international arrivals are;
  - a. Supervised quarantine in facilities at the port of entry (consistent with Level 4).
  - b. Self-isolation at place of residence (consistent with earlier approach).
  - c. Stop international flights arriving in New Zealand from all countries except those from certain Pacific countries for the duration of level 4 restrictions, until a. is in place and arrivals can be managed to capacity.
9. Public health officials assess that New Zealand's best chance of breaking the transmission of COVID-19 in the shortest possible period of time will be enabled by preventing further arrivals for the duration of the level 4 restrictions.
10. We further assess that an exception should be made for New Zealanders returning from the Pacific on the basis that this group does not represent a high risk of importing cases of COVID-19 into New Zealand and the numbers involved would be manageable in terms of supervised quarantine.

## Recommendation

It is recommended that the CVD committee:

11. **Note** that public health officials assess allowing entry to the anticipated large volumes of people arriving from international destinations poses an unacceptable public health risk to New Zealand in relation to COVID-19 transmission.
12. **Note** that public health officials advise that allowing this is inconsistent with the intentions behind moving to level 4.
13. **Agree** that the level of public health risk associated with mass international arrivals justifies halting all international flights arriving in New Zealand for the period that level 4 restrictions are in place except those arriving from certain Pacific countries. Those currently in the air should be permitted to land.

ENDS

**Dr Ashley Bloomfield**  
**Director-General of Health**