

4 February 2020

Minister of Foreign Affairs

For action by

4 February 2020

## Pacific Island Citizens: Implications Around Border Restrictions

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**BRIEFING** For decision.

**PURPOSE** To recommend that exemptions for Pacific Island citizens to New Zealand's temporary border restrictions be considered on a case by case basis.

## Recommended referrals

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Prime Minister	For concurrence by	4 February 2020
Minister of Tourism	For concurrence by	4 February 2020
Minister of Finance	For concurrence by	4 February 2020
Minister of Education	For concurrence by	4 February 2020
Minister of Health	For concurrence by	4 February 2020
Minister for Trade and Export Growth	For concurrence by	4 February 2020
Minister of Immigration	For concurrence by	4 February 2020
Minister for Ethnic Communities	For concurrence by	4 February 2020

## Contact details

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NAME	ROLE	DIVISION	WORK PHONE	MOBILE PHONE
Charlotte Darlow	Pacific Team Lead	ECC	s9(2)(a)	
Andrea Smith	SRO	ECC		

## Minister's Office comments

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## Key points

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- Initial reaction from Pacific governments in response to New Zealand's border restrictions has been positive. The step has been seen as a substantial mitigation measure to help protect the Pacific from the entry of nCoV.
  - However, we remain mindful that New Zealand's border restrictions have implications for Pacific citizens who may wish to transit New Zealand on return from mainland China (as it does for other nationals wishing to transit through New Zealand). s9(2)(g)(i) Fiji has adjusted its border settings to match those of Australia and New Zealand, so all three main transport hubs for the region now have the same restrictions. The situation remains fluid within the region, with individual Pacific governments continuing to put additional national border restrictions in place.
  - We are not aware that any Pacific Island citizens have been denied boarding or entry to New Zealand since the border restrictions commenced, but officials are monitoring the situation closely. No Pacific government has asked us for an exemption to allow travel to New Zealand by its citizens, however, we are realistic that this may well occur within the restriction period, particularly if it is extended beyond its initial duration.
  - s6(a)
  - At this stage, officials do not recommend that we include this exemption as a region-wide provision. We have no information available yet on what numbers of citizens may be involved. s6(b)
  - s6(a)
- That said, we may be able to accommodate requests on a case by case basis if we were confident that appropriate accommodation and support arrangements were available.
- In practice, this would likely manifest as either a government to government request (likely through our diplomatic posts), or individuals seeking to board planes to New Zealand. Officials are coordinating on what a protocol for response could look like in either scenario, so that we are best placed to support our Pacific partners. While it may be possible to secure satisfactory community-based arrangements for individuals, any requests for large numbers of citizens (e.g. a returning sports team) would likely require the use of standalone quarantine facilities, such as is being used for the isolation requirements of the

Wuhan assisted departure flight. s6(a)

- Officials recommend that we do not create a region wide exemption for Pacific citizens at this stage, but that we consider any requests on a case by case basis, with a forward leaning posture, as our public health capacity allows. Key principles underpinning this work would be our desire to support Pacific Island partners and communities in New Zealand, alongside continued vigilance to ensure that we minimise the risk of nCoV transmission into New Zealand and the wider region.

Charlotte Darlow  
for Secretary of Foreign Affairs and Trade

## Recommendations

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It is recommended that you:

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| 1 | <b>note</b> that officials are coordinating closely on the operational and policy implications for Pacific Island citizens of New Zealand's border restrictions, and are working to support Pacific partners. | <b>Yes / No</b> |
| 2 | s6(a)   | <b>Yes / No</b> |
| 3 | <b>agree</b> that we do not create a region-wide exemption for Pacific citizens at this stage, but that we consider any requests we may receive on a case by case basis.                                      | <b>Yes / No</b> |

Rt Hon Winston Peters  
Minister of Foreign Affairs