



Meeting of the COVID-19 Ministerial Group

Minute of Decision

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All of Government Plan for Managing Stranded People

The group of Ministers with Power to Act on COVID-19 matters [CAB-20-MIN-0130] convened on 31 March 2020 at 10.30am, and in accordance with their Power to Act:

- 1 **noted that:**
 - 1.1 limiting and managing the movement of people around New Zealand is mission critical to containing the spread of COVID-19 under Alert Level 4;
 - 1.2 there are thousands of New Zealanders seeking to return home from overseas, and thousands of foreign nationals stranded here who wish to be evacuated;
- 2 **noted that:**
 - 2.1 a holistic approach is needed across arriving and departing flights (commercial, charter, and repatriation) to ensure the right resources are in place to manage a safe, smooth arrivals process;
 - 2.2 this must allow for adequate physical separation with a parallel departures process to minimise transmission risk;
- 3 **noted that** there are a suite of actions in place, or being developed, to manage departures of stranded foreign nationals in New Zealand and arrivals of New Zealanders stranded overseas in order to ensure the success of the lock-down strategy during Alert Level 4, namely:
 - 3.1 standing up a managed process to safely process and accommodate New Zealanders returning home - this has already been agreed to by Cabinet with respect to arriving flights and is in operation;
 - 3.2 developing a similar centrally-managed process for those foreign nationals wishing to leave New Zealand, through an orderly evacuation process that prevents uncontrolled and large-scale domestic movements;
 - 3.3 in implementing an evacuation process, measures will include:
 - 3.3.1 allowing people who are in the city of their departure to take a private vehicle to the airport to leave on planned international air services departing New Zealand;

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- 3.3.2 developing transport options for foreign nationals across New Zealand to international airports, while maintaining physical separation, including domestic flights;
- 3.3.3 working with the airlines and diplomatic missions to proactively manage the schedule of departing government, charter and repatriation flights to stagger these in a manageable way;
- 3.3.4 s9(2)(f)(iv), s9(2)(g)(i), s6(a)

4 **directed** officials to report back to COVID-19 Ministers on 2 April 2020 on:

- 4.1 a process to transport people by land, in addition to private vehicles, to Auckland and Christchurch International Airports consistent with Level 4 requirements and the capacity of the Airports to process people;
- 4.2 a process to use domestic Air New Zealand flights to get people from regional centres to Auckland and Christchurch International Airports consistent with Level 4 requirements and the capacity of the Airports to process people;
- 4.3 s9(2)(f)(iv), s9(2)(g)(i), s6(a)

4.4 indicative financial implications;

5 **agreed** that in the interim, the moratorium on approving foreign government assisted charter flights should continue;

6 **agreed** that officials should assure foreign governments that the New Zealand Government is working through these issues as a matter of urgency while the moratorium is in place;

7 **noted** that while they wait to be evacuated, stranded foreign nationals will need to shelter in place, and that many will have the means to support themselves, but where they do not:

- 7.1 consular assistance from their own governments and travel insurance should be the first port of call;
- 7.2 some may also be able to continue work to support themselves, including in essential services;
- 7.3 limited support can be made available to match these people to suitable accommodation, to access emergency healthcare, and, as a last resort, access to emergency support through regional Civil Defence and Emergency Management Groups;

8 **noted** that:

- 8.1 these measures would be temporary and undertaken on an extraordinary basis, in light of the overriding public health interests associated with a pandemic;

8.2 if widespread compliance with limitations on people movements is not achieved, there is a risk that Level 4 will need to be kept in place for longer;

9 **noted** that communication of these measures should be clear that this support is time limited, and that this does not create a precedent for future situations;

10 **noted** that:

10.1 demand for support from stranded foreign nationals is uncertain, but currently low;

10.2 s9(2)(f)(iv), s9(2)(g)(i)

11 **noted** that officials are preparing advice on and plans for repatriation of New Zealanders s9(2)(f)(iv), s9(2)(g)(i)

12 s9(2)(f)(iv), s9(2)(g)(i)

Rachel Hayward
for Secretary of the Cabinet

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Copied to officials via email