

POST-CABINET PRESS CONFERENCE: MONDAY, 22 MARCH 2021
HANSARD TRANSCRIPT

PM: Kia ora koutou katoa. I'll start with a look to the week ahead. Tomorrow and Wednesday I'm in the House and attending Cabinet committees in Wellington. Tomorrow I'll also be meeting with Local Government New Zealand and presenting the Prime Minister's Awards for Literary Achievement. On Wednesday I'll be chairing the public session of the annual review of security and intelligence agencies. On Wednesday evening I'll be presenting the Sportswoman of the Decade award at the Halberg Awards in Auckland. On Thursday I'll be doing visits in Hamilton, including Montana catering, which supplies 9,000 school lunches to 25 schools in the Waikato as part of the Government's free school lunches programme. Myself and transport Minister Wood will then attend the official launch of the Te Huia commuter rail service, which connects Hamilton to Auckland and is expected to replace 72,000 annual return car trips. On Friday I'll be in Auckland with visits in the electorate in the morning, in a bilateral meeting with Prime Minister Brown of the Cook Islands, and a speech at a Xero small business event. On Saturday I'll be speaking at the unveiling of the Pacific Islands memorial at Pukeahu National Memorial Park.

This week marks one year since New Zealand went into level 4 lockdown. We, I believe, met the crisis of a global pandemic head on. We went hard and early, and we succeeded in doing what we set out to do, which was to eliminate the virus. That was 2020, one of the most challenging years we'd faced as a country. One year on, New Zealand's overall COVID strategy remains the same—elimination—but how we eliminate is shifting. The vaccine is allowing us to move our COVID defences away from what has essentially been a collective barricade in the form of border controls, managed quarantine facilities, and isolation to individual armour that we each can carry around with us in the form of a vaccine. We intend to vaccinate everyone who can be vaccinated before the end of 2021, because this offers the same safety of an elimination strategy but with far greater freedoms and less risk. As a result of the vaccine, 2021 is the year when possibilities begin to open up, when we get to lock in the gains that everyone worked so hard for in 2020.

A key opportunity that has arisen as a result of our strategy is quarantine-free travel with Australia. There's been much speculation over this. Our position has always been clear. Opening up our borders to our nearest neighbour is a priority not only for tourism and business but also in terms of reuniting friends and families. We know what it would mean for people. But we also know that many New Zealanders are nervous. They don't want to put everything we've fought so hard for at risk, and they want us to proceed in the same vein as our overall COVID response, and that is with caution. We also know people want certainty. They want certainty about what lies ahead, certainty to make plans, certainty about what the future looks like. What we haven't wanted to do is enter a situation in which New Zealanders' health or lives are at risk once more, or we were unable to offer that certainty.

It goes without saying that opening up a green travel zone with Australia, without quarantine, is highly complex. Officials have been considering and working through these complexities for months. Cabinet today received an update on this work. But before any final decision is made by Cabinet, we'll need to be satisfied that the following conditions have been met. (1) That our response framework for when there are cases in Australia is fit for purpose and ready. (2) We have measures in place to effectively contact trace travellers from Australia should we need to. (3) All technical issues are resolved, including transiting passengers and managed isolation fees when, for instance, passengers arrive in either Australia or New Zealand but their ultimate destination is different. (4) That we have the appropriate regulatory mechanisms in place. (5) That airlines, airports, and agencies are ready. Much work has already been done here with issues like crew separation from high-risk areas and for when they would fly in a quarantine zone, and red and green zones at our airports. Much work has been done there, given we already have quarantine-free travel inward from the likes of the Cook Islands. And, finally, that the Director-General of Health has provided an up-to-date health assessment. Once we've met these criteria, we anticipate we'll be in a position to open

the bubble. We understand the need for planning and certainty, and talks with airlines and airports has been ongoing. We intend to announce the commencement date for the trans-Tasman travel bubble on 6 April. Just to be clear, we intend to announce the commencement date for trans-Tasman travel on 6 April.

Before I open up for questions, I'd like to take a moment to touch on another Government priority, and that's housing. Tomorrow, Ministers Robertson, Woods, Parker, and myself will be setting out a plan and package to tilt the balance towards first-home buyers and increased housing supply. Our Government inherited a housing crisis, the problems and challenges of which have been well canvassed—decades of failure to invest, increasing numbers of speculators in the market, unsustainable house price growth locking out first-home buyers, soaring rent levels, and restrictive planning rules.

Property investors now make up the biggest share of buyers in the market. Meanwhile, house prices are rising much faster than wages. Our homes continue to climb out of reach for many first-home buyers, and the New Zealand housing market has become the least affordable in the OECD. It will take time to turn all this around, and, unfortunately, there is no silver bullet.

But there are things we can do. We have been getting on with this already. Things like reforming the RMA, compelling local councils to free up land through the National Policy Statement on Urban Development, working with the Reserve Bank to take some demand out of the market, and undertaking the biggest public housing build programme since the 1970s.

But we believe there is more we can do, and tomorrow morning we'll outline a suite of both urgent and longer-term measures. The package will include steps to increase the supply of houses and improve affordability for home buyers and renters. It will aim to tip the balance away from property investors and towards first-home buyers and curb rampant speculation. It is, I believe, a plan that will start to make a real difference to this complex problem, and I look forward to sharing it with you all tomorrow, here, on this same podium.

But for now, open for questions.

Media: Prime Minister, you talk about giving people certainty. Why not announce a date for the Oz bubble today, then?

PM: Because we don't have a date for you. You know, I've set out today the things that we are making sure that are ready to go. And on 6 April, we'll then be sharing the date for the opening of the trans-Tasman arrangement.

What I want to do, though, is make sure that when we do that, we know we're ready, that we have a plan in place if in the near term we have an outbreak, and we almost certainly, on either side of the Tasman, will have to deal with scenarios like that. We've got to make sure we have a plan in place to deal with the number of people who could either be in New Zealand or Australia at that time.

Media: You've had a year already, though.

PM: Yep, and in that time, on at least 12 occasions, we've met, as New Zealand and Australia teams together, to work through a New Zealand and Australia arrangement. That would have meant that we'd be working together on decision makings around when we would shut down the borders or when we might have to cease travel if we had outbreaks. Since that time, obviously, states have opened up. The majority have not. They still remain closed. Our view is, rather than trying to work through a solution that sees all of Australia with New Zealand, that we can work through an arrangement that sees us operating with some states but not others.

Media: Why are we still in a place where you're still having to check off some of these things, like getting the airports ready, getting the airlines ready? Why hasn't that work been—

PM: Well, actually, no. To be fair to both the airlines and the airports, a significant amount of work has already been done in those areas. What, of course, is different, and what we've been planning through the entire time, is we now will have to deal with different

circumstances and different states, which does add complexity, but it is not insurmountable. What I would say is that there's no other countries in the world who have been working to an elimination strategy, who are now trying to maintain that whilst opening up travel between the two. So we are having to create a brand new rule book. Now, we've done that before, and we're doing it again here, but it does come with complexity, particularly for New Zealand more so than for Australia.

Media: That state-by-state approach is not new. Your former deputy back in April last year was both publicly and with his counterpart talking about how it would be easier to work at a state-by-state level than trying to work with the whole country. So why has it taken until now for the Government to catch up and actually be having this conversation?

PM: We never. At that time, we were still working on a country by country—two-country arrangement, because it, quite simply, was easier. If you think about it from New Zealand's perspective, we're now having to deal with a situation where if you have an outbreak in one state, how you'll then manage travel in surrounding and potentially bordering states in the eventuality that, for instance, they may not close down border travel between the two—it's much more complex for New Zealand than it is for Australia. So we'd always been working country to country. In fact, even after they opened up as states, we were still working on that basis. Our view has been it would be faster if we try and formulate a different arrangement. The last thing I would say is that this change in approach isn't without risk for travellers. We may have scenarios where travel will shut down one way, and it may, therefore, leave travellers, for a period of time, stranded on either side of the Tasman. That's one of the downsides of moving through this arrangement, but it does mean that we can find a solution and open up more quickly. Yeah, I'll come to you, Jane. We've got time, everyone. Jane.

Media: Was there a separate paper on Niue and Cook Islands, and could there be a separate announcement on that in terms of timing, from the—

PM: Yeah, so we, of course, have separate one-way inward travel arrangements for Niue and the Cook Islands. The question has been around return quarantine-free travel, going in-country. So they're already coming here without quarantine; the question is what happens to New Zealanders going into the Cook Islands and Niue. Obviously, Niue and the Cook Islands haven't taken the same approach on time lines. One has been a little more willing to wait a little longer than the other, but what I think I'll do is just wait until we've got PM Brown in country on Friday to talk in a little more detail around that.

Media: But is there anything holding it up from the New Zealand side in terms of a full safe-travel kind of bubble, as it were, between those countries, or is up to those two countries—

PM: Yeah, I'm going to actually leave some of that, because it's not just, of course, what's happening on the New Zealand side; it's, ultimately, also, what's happening on the Cook Islands side as well. So I think probably I'd prefer to speak to that in more detail with Prime Minister Brown with me on Friday.

Media: Will it be a different time frame to that of the trans-Tasman bubble?

PM: We've never said that they necessarily will be linked or on the same time frame, no. So they don't necessarily have to be connected.

Media: What makes you think—or what is going to change between now and 6 April that will allow you to tick all the boxes?

PM: Work on contact tracing requirements, use of the QR codes, any arrangements around testing that may or may not be required, the final framework for alert—basically, essentially, an alert level system that takes into account multiple states. What can people expect? On what basis would New Zealand shut down? If we had or saw cases offshore—we want to provide a little transparency around that—and just making sure that we've got that final readiness in place. What are our expectations of all airlines operating in New Zealand, not just Air New Zealand, around crew separation, and so on.

So there are layers to this, not all of which of which I'll bore you with now, but it does have a significant layer of complexity. But we feel confident we can announce a date from the 6th.

Media: If all those criteria are met, which some people would argue they are already being met—or what criteria [*Inaudible*] on April 6th, how long will it be between that date and the actual announcement? Are you talking weeks, or—

PM: Well, that would—essentially, if I did that, I would be announcing a date, wouldn't I? So what we've set out are the things that we expect that we need to have—you know, even if they haven't been—that plan or some certainty around the date on which they'll be delivered, and then we'll be sharing that with you. But I have always said I expect the opening to be soon. So we feel confident enough about where we are now to announce the commencement date on 6 April. Yeah, Ben.

Media: I'll let Henry—

Media: Do you envision the safe travel advice changing? It's currently that Kiwis should not leave New Zealand under any circumstances.

PM: Yeah, so—

Media: Do you think, when there is a safe travel bubble—

PM: Yeah, I mean, look, obviously that would need to be updated, and you'd expect that as part of the work that we're doing. Equally, Australia, and keep in mind we've operated differently here. Kiwis have continued to travel through this period. Obviously, they're required to quarantine on return, but they have been able to leave the country. In Australia, you have to get a visa; you have to get permission to leave the country, and so they'll have things on their side that they've worked through as well, and I imagine that includes their safe travel guidance too.

Media: And that's a nice segue into my question, because it's been reported that the exit visa has been removed by the Australian Government. Did you ask for that, or—

PM: Oh, look, it is obvious that as part of these arrangements that would need to be amended, so that has been part of our talks, and so all of this will be in preparation.

Media: So now have you cleared off the issues with the Australian Government and they will focus directly on chatting to states—or how does that work?

PM: Oh, so we have continued talks at a federal level, because, on some occasions, some of these—you know, the decisions are being made at that level. So we will, of course, keep up those discussions around how we expect to operate, what communication we'll have if we're making a decision. Because, at the moment, of course, they tell us when they're going to shut down and they tell us when they're going to open up. So we'll be keeping up the conversations with them about how we anticipate operating.

One of the issues will be that it won't always be in parallel. So that's the issue that—for all of the view that this is a simple thing to deliver, we will see the complexity when we see singular decisions made on one side that could lead to people being stranded.

Media: If someone travels to Australia, how much warning will they get before the borders close, if any, and what responsibility will the Government take for getting them back?

PM: This is one of the reasons why Cabinet is working through, in a lot of detail, the complexity around an arrangement like this, because, as you will have already seen from Australia, often there is very little notice when travel ceases. And we will have to operate on the same basis. If we want to maintain a situation where New Zealand does not have COVID in the country, if there is an outbreak identified in Australia and, for instance, they're not aware of the source, it is very likely that you would see us close down travel for a period of time until we can be confident of what is occurring. It's not too dissimilar to exactly what we do with our alert level framework.

Media: So they're on their own, effectively? If you choose to go over, you have to take that responsibility.

PM: As much as, of course, we will want to be inviting Australians to come into New Zealand—and I'm sure likewise, they'll be wanting to do the same for Kiwis. I think, on both sides of the ditch, we will be saying: to make this work, there will be an element of flyer beware. We want to keep this open, we want to keep it moving, but we also want to keep both sides safe. So there may be occasions when we take a precautionary approach and for short periods of time, travel ceases.

Media: Could they be on the hook for MIQ fees as well?

PM: So these are some of the things that we're working through as well. You know, if you had a significant outbreak versus something that's smaller and isolated—would we require at-home isolation or would there be an occasion where MIQ would be utilised. So you can see the complexity here. We would never have enough MIQ to accommodate everyone who could potentially be in Australia or returning from a particular zone at any given time. Thousands travel between New Zealand and Australia. So these are some of the more complex issues we're having to work through.

Media: Do you agree with Damien O'Connor that COVID-19 has taught the tourism sector to be less cocky?

PM: Look, you know, obviously, Damien will take his view—he lives and works across a particular region that has been hard hit. My view would be that we have all wanted to see the tourism industry back on its feet, but, equally, we've also heard them tell us that they want us to keep domestic tourism nice and strong as well. So we're trying to strike that balance around getting our domestic population moving, but making sure we don't put that at risk by adding too early before we've got the safeguards in place another travel zone.

Media: So you don't agree with his assessment of the industry?

PM: No, I wouldn't express it in that way. I think the industry, by and large, accepts that we've done what we can where we've been able to, but I know it hasn't always been enough from their perspective.

Media: This is the second time that his comments have been, you know—his strong comments, you haven't necessarily agreed with. I mean, is he off-message here? Is he out of line—

PM: Oh, look, I won't always express things in the same way as my Ministers. I expect that would be the case. We're all different people.

Media: Prime Minister, what do you think of the SIS releasing its internal report, with the lead up to the March 15 attacks? How confident are you that the changes that recommends have been enacted?

PM: Well, I am confident that, of course, well, for instance, from the royal commission, we are working through quite a wide-ranging programme of work, some of which we'd already started work on. So, for instance, they advised that we needed to address the issue that there weren't offences around the preparation of potential terrorist activity. We'd already started work there, but they've also suggested wider reviews be undertaken, and we are kicking that off as well.

Media: How much safer are we now from domestic terror threats?

PM: I think you've seen in the analysis of our landscape a bit of a consistency since the aftermath. We know this because, unfortunately, of our experience that we are not immune to threats of domestic terror in New Zealand. What we've got to do is make sure we continually prepare ourselves the best we can.

Media: Will you be extending the brightline test?

PM: Oh, I'm not going to be making any announcements relevant to housing until tomorrow.

Media: On MIQ, Prime Minister, would an Australian bubble free up space within MIQ for more people to come from other parts of the world, or will that be set aside as a contingency?

PM: Yeah, so I got asked about this last week and actually it was, I think, worth reflecting on the point that Michael Baker has made, which is you're freeing up, you know, a bit of capacity in MIQ, but you run the risk of heightening the risk profile for New Zealand by taking what has been low-risk or lower-risk individuals and replacing them with those coming from higher-risk countries. But actually what we're really having to build into our thinking is, with that capacity, to what extent would it be required for emergency situations in managing the bubble or not? So those are some of the things Cabinet's working through. What I expect is that at the time that we make announcements around the trans-Tasman bubble, we will also give an indication of how we expect MIQ capacity to be used.

Media: So it's possible that it might not increase much at all?

PM: Oh, look, that's one of the areas where Cabinet is working through how that would be utilised and how it would be apportioned, but we are factoring in some of those issues that are being raised by our experts in the field.

Media: In terms of possible, kind of, snap closures of the bubble—without a bi-national, kind of, body dealing with this, that could happen—are you expecting that there's going to be a need for some better communications or notification framework for the states to New Zealand in terms of when it might shut down?

PM: To be fair, it's actually, I think, improved quite a bit since we had the one-way travel announced. We've become very aware of how important it is to have really timely information flowing to Australia, because they are making these significant decisions. My view is that will only continue to be of incredible importance to both sides. Previously, Australia's decisions were affecting predominantly Kiwis; those decisions now will affect Australians in New Zealand too. So it's in both our best interests to make sure that we're communicating well, and my view is that we actually are. Our health officials talk directly to one another.

Media: And will the New Zealand Government find itself in a position where it's actually going to have to start telling New Zealanders about shut-downs in Australia rather than waiting for the 6 o'clock news? Will you have to communicate that yourself?

PM: We will have to—sorry, run that with me again.

Media: Will you have to communicate it yourself that Victoria is shutting down, instead of what's currently happening, where it's mostly shared through the news?

PM: On the Victoria side, for instance?

Media: Yeah.

PM: Oh, well, look, we would want to make sure that we were making decisions in a timely way, so if we had information that meant we'd met, really, the threshold where we would want to take a pause, then we would want to move on that very quickly, yep.

Media: Going back to your comment earlier, where you said working with Australia as a whole country would be easier than on a state-by-state basis—

PM: Yeah, by and large.

Media: —can you kind of explain the logic behind that, because as it stands at the moment, state Premiers are making state-by-state decisions; they're shutting borders, opening borders, and doing that amongst themselves. So having New Zealand as, kind of, effectively, another state in the mix—wouldn't that be a better system, because you've already got a state-by-state system operating?

PM: Well, a better system from the perspective, potentially, of, you know, getting early access—yes. A better system from the perspective of New Zealand now having to integrate

itself into some of those mechanisms—it does make it tricky, because, of course, if you have, for instance, a case or a series of cases or an outbreak, indeed, in New South Wales, for instance, you may choose then to say, “Well, we need to take a closure there.” How then do you deal with travellers who might be coming through from Queensland if they don’t close their domestic border between the two? They may but they may not. So then are you closing down to Queensland as well? These are all issues that we need to make sure that we’re factoring into the way that we’ll work, giving as much transparency around how we’ll make those decisions and what travellers can expect.

Media: The point I’m making, though, is that those circumstances would exist under a whole-of-country model anyway—

PM: We had previously been trying to negotiate a framework that would mean that we had some consistency in the way we were dealing with Australia as a whole. But now those are decisions that we’re going to have to individually take on how we’re dealing with travel coming in and out of individual states.

Media: Minister Hipkins has previously said that Cabinet can’t mandate use of the scanning component of the NZ COVID Tracer app because Apple and Google would pull their support for the Bluetooth component. Is that your understanding, and, you know, are there any concerns raised by a potential attempt to mandate scanning by Australian visitors?

PM: I don’t have that level of detail around what it would do for, you know—from a licensing perspective. I, unfortunately, cannot answer that question. But what we are thinking about is, you know, what will be really important to us is that when we’ve got that extra complexity, if someone who’s travelling in from overseas, where our finding services may not be as good, of course, because we don’t have as much information about someone who is a non-citizen or resident—what can we do to enhance our ability to make sure that we can contact people successfully? So that’s some of the things we’re working through.

Media: Will the Government formally apologise for the Dawn Raids?

PM: Oh, I understand an approach has been made, or perhaps correspondence received. I’ve only just been advised of that, so I want to take the time to receive that properly, look at the request that’s been made, and come back to you officially, if I can. Sorry, I’ve only just been made aware of that.

Media: How much did the pressure from the likes of Scott Morrison on New Zealand not having a travel bubble play into your decision?

PM: Not at all. We’ve always made our own decisions on our own terms, based on our strategy, and, as I’ve said a couple of times this morning, I think there’s a bit of a view that this work hadn’t been under way. We have met between New Zealand and Australia 12 times trying to work through some of the complexity, and we’re seeing that bear fruit now. None of this has been done just in the last week; this work has been under way for quite some time.

Media: Why is there only one white supremacist or far right terror entity on the national terror list?

PM: So that’s our terrorist designation list, and I think the easiest way for me to explain why that is is by sharing with you the designation criteria, which reads that “The entity has knowingly carried out or has knowingly participated in an attempt to conduct one or more terrorist acts.” So there’s a certain degree to which, actually, activity and particularly international designation plays into our system. It does, however, not mean that that is the only way that you become an entity or individual of concern to our authorities. That is not true. That is, however, one mechanism where we stop the financial flow and the financing of terrorist activity into these organised groups.

Media: Some security experts, though, would like to see you use that list as a way to, I guess, curb those groups and to stop the financial flow going into them. So could you, yeah, change the—

PM: Yeah, and so in order for the financial flows to be stopped, it does, by default, require there to be a level of organisation, even if it is relatively sophisticated, and for the entity to be identified and designated. You can see the criteria is quite specific around what's required to meet that threshold. But, again, no one should for a moment think that if you are not on our designation list that you are not an entity or individual of concern. That is not true; it is just one of our mechanisms for where we identify people of concern.

Media: Isn't criteria 2 restricted, though—should it change?

PM: It is tightly defined, but that's because by default it then needs to be the existence of an organised entity, and that's one of the ways that we do that. My understanding—but I will check this—is that our designation is fairly similar to other countries in the way that we work. Also, of course, if a group is designated by an international body of the UN, we don't replicate it in our domestic legislation, necessarily.

Media: A couple of weeks ago, Ginny Andersen said she only understood the full mechanics of her unique electorate rental agreement in the latter half of 2020—she now says she sort of understood that since 2017 onwards. Are you happy that she's told the full truth throughout this time about her unique rental deal?

PM: Yeah, look, what I'm concerned about is making sure that our MPs are meeting the rules that apply to them, and be it through the Electoral Commission or through Parliamentary Services. Of course, you know, as you're aware, the arrangement that has existed there historically has now changed as of the election—it's not unusual that that would happen when lease arrangements come up, and it's not unusual for MPs to inherit arrangements that they subsequently change.

Media: Do you think she should have been more forthcoming with the truth when she was asked about it, though?

PM: Oh, ultimately, all of our arrangements, if they're being checked by Parliamentary Services and the Electoral Commission, are being examined by others, and by the entities that really have a role in making sure that what should be happening on behalf of taxpayers is.

Media: Now that we know that Auckland's Skypath is going to be delayed, how much longer will people have to wait to be able to walk or bike over the harbour bridge?

PM: We all want to see Auckland connected and the ability for people to be able to move across from the shore over into central Auckland by walking and cycling. The issue that we've encountered is since we've, of course, had, you know, the recent engineering fallout from the accident on the harbour bridge, that has posed some challenges. What we need to do is make sure that when we set up that ability to move between the two we do it safely.

Media: Is that a completely different structure needed, given all of those engineering problems?

PM: A massive question there. I think we're, rightly, asking Waka Kotahi: what's it going to take to make this happen? Is it still feasible and viable to do it through the original plans? Do we need to think of other options? Ultimately, though, that goal that we have to build that connection by walking and cycling so that you're not confined by car across the harbour bridge, we all still share that, we're all still working towards that.

Media: The harbour bridge is [*Inaudible*] cars right now. Couldn't one of them be given over to cyclists in the meantime?

PM: That's not a question I have ever asked, but I think what we would want is for the option to be sustainable in the long term. We know that there are capacity constraints, and I wouldn't want to, actually, unnecessarily set up this function between the two when what we want is multi-modal transport.

Media: Currently only half of the Australian states are open to New Zealand travellers without quarantine—

PM: Thank you for highlighting that.

Media: No worries. When New Zealand opens for Australian travellers—am I getting this the right way around? I'm confused.

PM: Yes.

Media: Thank you. Will you only be opening to those three Australian states or will it be opened to whichever states chooses to take up your offer?

PM: Yeah, so we would be looking to make sure that those that we deem to be safe we would be open to, unless there were an issue in any particular state, in which you would close. Of course, the most obvious factor for us is where there is currently the ability to move between the two, and that's not the case everywhere.

Media: But they're reciprocal?

PM: Yeah. So for us it would be, if it's safe, then we'd be opening up regardless of whether or not you actually had the ability to travel between the two or not.

Media: You previously had two different timeframes for opening the bubble and you've walked away from those for different reasons. Can you give an absolute guarantee that the—

PM: I had to, have I? We gave the general first quarter suggestion.

Media: You also said at Te Papa last year that September was realistic, but then the Melbourne bubble quashed that because—

PM: Yes, it did. You'd forgive us that one, then, obviously.

Media: Sure. Will you give an absolute guarantee that the date you nominate, on 6 April, will be the date—

PM: And that is why we'll be announcing it on 6 April, because I want—at that time that we give that date, I want it to be something we can stick to. Keep in mind that it will be the case for this opening that if at any given time there is an outbreak, we will have a closure, because that's how we maintain freedom.

Media: What would happen if either Australia or New Zealand unilaterally opened to a third country?

PM: Oh, then we would, of course, review our settings—so look at whether or not it changed up the risk profile at all. And that was another thing that we were working through country by country, Jo, when we were working at that level. Then we were talking about how would we deal with third-country entry into a bubble, but we'll now have to just deal with that separately as it arises.

Media: Other than Australia and the Pacific Islands—the Realm countries, sorry—who has approached New Zealand looking to set up a bubble—

PM: Oh, look, there's been a number—some of them, actually, were very, very early on, and they were more caveated. If at some point we're able to open up, let's keep up talks. So, obviously, Fiji has been interested for some time, and you've already heard the suggestion from Singapore.

Media: What about Taiwan? Any movement there?

PM: Oh, I would need to go back and see whether or not that was officially raised. Forgive me, Henry.

Media: How much of a factor is the vaccination of both countries' border workers? Because once they're all vaccinated, the risk of an outbreak from MIQ is much, much lower.

PM: Well, it is lessened—absolutely, it is lessened. But, no, that actually hasn't factored into our thinking. You know, obviously we've been working on this since before the vaccine started rolling out. So, no. It's an added benefit, but it's not contingent. Our opening is not contingent on that being completed.

Media: On the designated terrorist entities' list, there are far-right groups that are organising and have knowingly committed terror attacks. Canada, for example, has designated—

PM: The Proud Boys, didn't they?

Media: Yeah, the Proud Boys, [*Inaudible*]. Would you like to take another look at that?

PM: And I don't—to be fair, I am just not au fait enough with the process that Canada uses in order to designate. But international activity can be used to meet our criteria. But, again, as I've said, the entity has knowingly carried out or has knowingly participated in an attempt to conduct one or more terrorist acts. Again, though, we do keep this under rolling review, and not for a moment should anyone look at that list and say that that is the full scope of what New Zealand considers to be a group of risk or concern or violence.

OK. Thank you, everyone.

conclusion of press conference