

## Speech 1: February 29 (JA1)

Hello everyone, I'm here with our Minister of Health, David Clarke, and we've just been visiting with the staff who have been working at health line, and I've been obviously briefing up their response in recent weeks in line with all of our preparation around COVID-19, because they have been the teams who have been proactively checking in on individuals who are New Zealand citizens who have been coming in from countries where we've been on watch around COVID-19. They've been doing welfare checks for those in self-isolation, so they have, I mean you have been doing a great job. But we have to also acknowledge that in the last 24 hours we have had a confirmed case. Now, we have been well prepared for this for some time and in fact while pandemic plan in New Zealand has obviously been in existence for a long time, what we did in January as we started to see obviously coronavirus, what we now know is COVID-19, emerging and a greater transmission, we operationalized our pandemic plan back in the beginning of January, so that's been underway for some time. We put in border restrictions and like some of the first countries globally to put in border restrictions. So of course no one who's traveled through mainland China and has able to come into New Zealand, have been nearing the last 14 days and we haven't had exemptions other than for our own citizens and residents. We even had exemptions like some other countries are looking at like Australia. Just also, Minister, we've added Iran to that list. Now the reason we've done that and this is, I think, really important. The reason we've done that is because, unlike other countries who are experiencing COVID-19, there hasn't been the same messaging around quarantine and self-isolation. We haven't necessarily seen the same level of health system and it's not clear that we've seen accurate reporting of the cases.

[...] And keeping in mind, of course, the World Health Organization advice has been that there be no border restrictions. We got our own health advice utilized, for instance our own chief, my own chief science advisor, and we also ask for advice across those countries that are head cases emerging as well. The advice is continue to be that border restrictions should be at we've seen at the center of the outbreak.

We've seen the center of the outbreak keeping in mind of the roughly roughly 80,000 cases we've seen the vast majority over 77,000 have all come through mainly in China, so that's the recommendation that has come from officials, we have been checking and getting that advice every 48 hours. A constant review of what's happening globally in the way that New Zealand should respond and getting that advice.

Now coming to coming to what we've had over the last 24 hours. As you may have seen, we had a citizen, I think it's important to make their point because citizens have always, regardless of where they've been, have always been able to come home and we need to make sure that our citizens are able to return to New Zealand. But what we expect of them, of course, is that they've been in those countries where there have been. If they've been in China, that they self-isolating quarantine. We had an individual who's come home via Bali and they've spent some time in Iran. Now that case in my book and from what we've seen, has proven to be textbook, and once coming home they've been transported back home privately with their families. So they have not been exposed to anyone else. That felt unwell. That contacted Healthline. Healthline has advised them because they're suspected case, to come into our hospital. They were met by health officials in protective gear and they have been kept isolated for the period of treatment and the physicians and those working with them have all been wearing protective gearing following strict protocols and obviously they're working with the family in contact tracing anyone who's been with them in the vicinity that's considered contact with that case. So our public health officials were actively reaching those sort of travelling on the plane in the same row. Two seats in front, two rows behind. And that's because coronavirus, we know about human transition, is still transmitting through great contact with particles, so coughing on someone or other like. So just it's not like measles, so if it were a measles case, it would contact the entire plane because that's the level of infectiousness. Coronavirus is not the same. So that's why it's two sets of front two seats behind. We're going to step further though. Healthline is proactively going to contact others on the plane just to get public health messages and give some reassurance. You want to add on?

[...] And of course again keeping in mind that as the Minister has said, that a number of countries around the world obviously have been experiencing these cases, but it is obvious they didn't we move into the containment phase and we exactly what we're doing, which is contacting those who may have had contact making sure we're putting in place protocols to keep content monitoring and their health and well being good public health wise on exactly what needs to be done. So I saw a message, someone saying. Why isn't everyone being contacted on the plane? Just if

you listen back again to just what we know specifically about the way that coronavirus is transmitted and it just means actually same advice around a flu season is the same medical advice that's been provided just generally for the public. Just about basic hygiene and also the way that we make sure that we limit the course as best as we can.

[...] And so, look, again, I'd just like to remind everyone the best source of advice, [www.health.govt.nz](http://www.health.govt.nz). There will unfortunately be a lot of misinformation out there right now. I have explicitly said that I think some of the headlines we've seen have been irresponsible. And frankly, unless you need to go to the supermarket, there's no need to stockpile. There's no need to stop going about your daily lives. We have, as I say, a system that is world class and very, very good at situations like this. Keep in mind that the system went through this some years ago with SARS and New Zealand did have a case and the system worked exactly as we would expect. So look, we're out and about. We're continuing to be out and about. You know, I might move out to a park later or something like that once I'm finished with some papers, so look, I just wanna continue to get that level of reassurance that obviously a number of countries are dealing with exactly what we're dealing with now and we've got a fantastic system to deal with it. And we are. So look, we'll keep tracking through if I've missed questions. We'll keep tracking through and keeping an eye on what's coming through to make sure that we're trying to respond to those questions that are coming through. The final thing I wanna say is that the border where the ministers just think he's been visiting and there are, you know, very specific things happening it out at our border exactly as you would expect. Our health officials are there. We've obviously got border restrictions in place, but we're actually taking very proactive steps for all international travelers at the moment as well. The suggestion that New Zealand closes off its borders. Look, this is actually the WHO has not recommended that that be the response, and so that is not what we have done. We have, however gone further than they might have recommended, because we do believe given we know where that epicenter is that we wanted to take that extra measure. So look. The question there has been, now look, there has not been testing at airports, and that's because actually, as I say, if you're not symptomatic and there'll be people of course who are travelling from countries that do not have cases, for instance, we wouldn't. You know, there's no reason why you would pick it up. Yeah, and actually.

[...] Yeah, and look, we can just want to again say look, we have called out where we think there's been some irresponsible headlines, people have been reporting that they've seen things happening at these supermarkets. I expect that as people start to see, you know, some have actually just used those fixed coming through that they will also making a difference, so we'll keep making sure we spread those messages, but otherwise everyone, this is exactly what we're planned for, so continue, continue on with your with your daily lives and we'll be touching base with any further information. Have a good day everyone.

## **Speech 2: March 2 (JA2)**

Alright. Good afternoon everyone. Look, I'll start with the week ahead. Tomorrow I will be speaking at the New Zealand Annual parliamentary function. On Wednesday morning I'll have the honor of reopening Select Committee Room 5, the room that has traditionally showcased the contribution of woman to Parliament and that's ahead of International Women's Day on Sunday the 8th of March. Later that day I'll be hitting along to Cups Day at Victoria University. On Friday I am visiting Christchurch. We have a number of appointments, including visiting a school that is benefiting from Mana Aka, program which has been running for just under two years, that puts councilors and a range of other mental health professionals in schools in Canterbury and Calcutta so that all primary and intermediate students have access to mental health and wellbeing support. Mana Aka has now helped four and a half thousand children.

Looking ahead to the weekend I'll be heading along to the prize giving of the 2020 Golden Shears competition in Masterton. I'll spend my comments today on a coronavirus update, given I know there will be an area. Interesting decisions have been made at cabinet that I wish to update you on. Firstly, I want to acknowledge the work that is going on across New Zealand to respond to coronavirus COVID-19.

At the weekend I was able to see some of this firsthand, including meeting those answering the phones at HealthLine and making proactive calls at Healthline, which has helped and supported more than 8000 people with their self-isolation measures.

At Auckland International Airport I was able to see the stepped-up screening and checks in place and the cooperation of incoming passengers. It all reinforced for me that we have an exemplary and robust plan in place across our public healthcare and our border systems. I want to thank those involved in this comprehensive line of work, work which has been ongoing since we operationalized the pandemic plan, at the beginning of this year.

I also want to let you know that the patient with COVID-19 is in a stable and improving condition. Also, officials have traced the 15 at-risk passengers from the flight. You'll recall that originally that number was slightly higher, now that officials have been able to dig into the passenger manifest is being determined that some passengers moved during flight, and so those are the groups that they, the number that has been targeted. The Director General of Health can give you more details and answer any of your questions around some of that contact and progress they've made on that at a press conference that will shortly follow this one. Today, cabinet was again focused on our work to protect both people's health and their jobs as we respond to COVID-19.

The global situation continues to change rapidly, and effective border management remains that first line to protect New Zealanders. While scientific knowledge continues to evolve, we know that a precautionary approach is best. As a cabinet, we have decided to extend the current temporary travel restrictions that are in place for China and Iran and the passengers from the Diamond Princess cruise ship for a further seven days. You'll recall that we have been putting in seven-day allotments and then reviewing those as a cabinet. We also agreed that incoming travelers from northern Italy and South Korea will now be asked to self-isolate for 14 days. They will also be required to register with Healthline. Currently at the border, those passengers who are citizens of New Zealand and permanent residents who are returning are required to complete these forms as they move through our border control and Border Enforcement area. And now we will be adding northern Italy and we will be adding South Korea as a requirement for passengers from those areas to complete this form. That enables health line and health officials to proactively contact those individuals, ensure that they are in self quarantine and to give those individuals specific instructions about quarantine and what is expected of them while set in quarantine. That currently work is being done at the border by healthcare officials and some of those I visited over the weekend.

This is a balanced precautionary approach that is based on an expert assessment of risk. It recognizes that while there are outbreaks in both countries, they also have well developed health systems and the outbreaks are largely located in specific regions, and again just to give context around the reason that we have a tier-one response for China, China and Iran and a Tier 1B response for these countries is that ultimately we have 87,000 cases, globally, the vast majority still remain in China; we have 7300 outside mainland China. 3000 of those roughly in South Korea, 1100 in Italy, and again predominantly in the northern Italy region.

We know self-isolation works, it is a long standing and successful approach to managing infectious diseases, and it has proved its worth again in recent weeks. When I visited Healthline, rather than reporting issues of noncompliance, they reported to me over compliance, and they've had contact with individuals who are at self-imposed extension to their quarantine over and above the time they need to spend an isolation. We have also of course through previous outbreaks of swine flu in 2009, self-isolation was used then very successfully, and research continues to reinforce that people are generally very compliant when self-isolation as imposed. In fact, and now notifying our partners and customers putting these latest decisions into operation as we speak. We've also stood up a COVID-19 cabinet subcommittee, that's to ensure we maintain a tight, coordinated government response. To date, we have had a group of ministers with power to act, they've been meeting often over the phone as required, that the last time that occurred was on Thursday evening 9:00 PM New Zealand time. This formalizes a decision-making process, so we have now cabinet and the COVID-19 subcommittee that will happen mid-week.

To predict jobs, the wellbeing of New Zealanders and our economy, cabinet has decided to expand the regional business partner program. On Thursday, Finance Minister Grant Robertson said the government was looking to boost this partner program, which we already have in place with Chambers of Commerce and economic development agencies around the country to assist businesses impacted by coronavirus. Now we currently invest 15.2 million per year in the program. The regional structure of the program allows for a dedicated local focus on firms and industries that are particularly each region using local knowledge and expertise. Now NDT advise that regional business partners are already experiencing an uplift and requests for support on issues like cash flow and even the ability to pay taxes. Cabinet agreed today to extra funding of \$4 million for the program, that will allow for extra advisers and

give them more time on the ground supporting businesses. It means locals support people providing business advisory services on specific issues, whether it's payroll issues, whether it's directly supporting them, liaising with IID around provisional taxation or GST or employment services. I know that this is something that chambers around the country were calling for, so I'm very pleased with being able to move so quickly on this decision. We've also agreed to bolster the support from MSD with the setup of rapid response teams. Cabinet has decided that as many as required but up to 16 teams on a needs basis.

At a ground level our MSD teams are contacting employers and employees on a daily basis. They're responding to their immediate needs and escalating when investors are unable to meet a need for instance, referral to IID or claim an order. Currently, regional labor market teams with an amnesty are proactively engaging with impacted employers and assisting people to move into employment when they're at risk of losing their current job by utilizing the establishment networks that MEC already have and local communities. But we wanted to do more.

As this next step, we're proposing a number of rapid response labor market teams to support impacted businesses and employees at a regional level. Now, similar responses have been used in the past on an ad hoc basis. A good example would be the Cadbury factory redundancies from a period of 2017 to 2018. That very practical teams that will take a lead at a regional level, supporting those impacted by COVID-19. They'll play a coordination function with other agencies, ensuring this place workers matched, where possible into other alternative, perhaps projects, and we are, for instance, as we speak, working actively on a Wilding Pine project as an option for those who currently work in the forestry industry. They'll also be responsible for identifying further regional employment and opportunities with other industries, creating a pipeline for potential employment opportunities.

To that end, Minister Twyford will be visiting Ty Rafferty tomorrow. One of the things that he'll be looking to regional opportunities where we can support those who may be facing job loss. Ty Rafferty is in an area where the Provincial growth fund, for instance, has put an additional funding into local roading projects. So we'll be actively asking whether this is an opportunity to provide micro credentialing training, perhaps to transition workforces that might traditionally be in forestry into other areas where we actually have skill shortages. Minister of Finance, myself this evening would also meet with business New Zealand, the Council of Trade Unions and business representatives to discuss the ongoing economic response coronavirus. This will include situation updates from the Ministry of Health, Treasury and MB. We will be looking into additional effects in our supply chain and focus our discussion on short term, medium term and long-term interventions. I will also meet with A New Zealand and my business advisory group this week in coronavirus will be a topic of conversation. Our economic response is focused on predicting jobs, supporting workers and businesses that are being impacted and ensuring they're in a position to bounce back strongly as the economy resumes the steady growth we were experiencing before COVID-19 appeared. In the meantime, as you see from the announcements today, public health remains our primary focus. And now I'm happy to take questions.

### **Speech 3: March 14 (JA3)**

Good afternoon everyone.

The full cabinet met this afternoon to make a list of significant decisions to further protect the health of New Zealanders and reduce the transmission of COVID-19 in New Zealand. First thing, I want to provide some context to our decisions: New Zealand has today relative to other countries a small number of cases. We have successfully managed to contact trace for every one of those cases and during the process of doing so for our latest case. This has been a critical part of our response. Secondly, a smaller number of cases has helped us to manage them in the right place and with the right support. The majority of our cases have not required our hospital system to care for them. The key continues to be leaving our hospital system for those who need it most. All of this points to one strategy which has guided our decision making. Spread the cases and ultimately flatten the curve.

It is not realistic in New Zealand to only have a handful of cases. The international evidence proves that it is not realistic, and so we must play and prepare for more cases. But the scale of how many cases would do and how fast we get them is something we should do as much as we can to slow. That is how we ensure health services are for

those who need them the most. That's essentially what this graph by Susie Wiles illustrates. In the case of a pandemic which hits the country hard and fast, you see the curve of cases rate rises steeply. This of course puts pressure on health systems and means it's more difficult to treat people in the place that they need it the most. The goal is to ultimately flatten the curve. It doesn't mean you have no cases. It means the pace at which you've received it deserve the right such that you can make sure people are here for the places they need the most, be it the moderate symptoms that you can deal with at home or be there for critical care if required.

Ultimately, New Zealand must flatten the curve. That is why ultimately we must go hard and we must go early. We must do everything we can to protect the health of New Zealanders. That is exactly why to tackle this global pandemic cabinet made far reaching and unprecedented decisions today because these are unprecedented circumstances. As of midnight Sunday, every person entering New Zealand, including returning New Zealand citizens and residents, will be required to be into self-isolation for 14 days, if required. The Pacific are exempted from this measure. They are the only ones. Anywhere from this country, though, will be required to automatically self-isolate shall they exhibit any covid-19 symptoms upon arrival in New Zealand. All of these restrictions will be reviewed in 16 days time.

Alongside Israel and a small number of Pacific islands who have officially closed their borders, this decision will mean New Zealand will have the widest ranging and toughest border restrictions of any country in the world. We are also encouraging New Zealanders to avoid all nonessential travel overseas. This helps reduce the risk of New Zealand and New Zealanders bringing COVID 19 back with them. We accept that the New Zealanders currently overseas, this is a stressful time, and we encourage any New Zealander needing consular assistance to contact the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

In addition to restrictions on the air travel, we are also taking food measures on cruise ships. As of on midnight tonight, we're issuing a directive to all cruise ships not to come to New Zealand until at least 30 June 2020 henceforth the incoming cruise ships. At which time the directive will be reviewed. I want to be very clear. These measures that we are announcing today are about people, not products. They do not apply to cargo ships. They do not apply to cargo planes. They do not apply to marine or air crew and we will be working to ensure we keep sea and air freight goods open for imports and exports.

In short, no one needs to conduct a runaway supermarket. It's worth remembering that we've had travel restrictions on China for over a month and the supply routes despite those travel restrictions have continued, so I just say here there is no need for anyone despite these restrictions to conduct a run on the supermarket. This is about restricting the movement of people, not products. We will continue to have imports coming to New Zealand. We are mindful that some items that come into New Zealand come via passenger flights. That's why support when needed will be provided to ensure that essential air freight like pharmaceuticals continue to arrive and be shuttered to New Zealand. We will take these decisions lightly. We know these travel restrictions will place a significant strain on the aviation industry and we anticipate some routes will reduce or cease for a period of time. As such, the government will work closely with the aviation sector to encourage and support airlines to remain active in New Zealand so that we can rebound from the restrictions quickly and not have significant impacts on our tourism sector exports and economy. In addition to these measures, the Finance Minister will also announce an economic response, including the business continuity package, on Tuesday. We are also stepping up our actions at the border as a key departure route to the Pacific. New Zealand does have a huge sense of responsibility to our Pacific neighbors, as such strict new forwarding exit measures for people travelling to the Pacific will be compliance. These include no travel for people who have travelled outside of New Zealand in the past 14 days. No travel for close or casual context of a confirmed case. No travel for anyone who is symptomatic and health assessments, including temperatures checks. Taken as a whole, the border measures we are taking today will mean significantly more people will enter self-isolation and supporting and facilitating them to occur is critical. You might recall we are already registering all travelers into New Zealand and helpline who are required to self-isolate and helpline is monitoring the self isolation process. Today we instructed officials to step up enforcement of self isolation through measure such as spot checks. It is worth mentioning though, today more than 10,500 people are or have successfully self-isolated in New Zealand. People know it's in the best interest of their community and they are pulling together to look after one another. After all the combination of restricting the virus coming here and isolating them when it does are two of the most important steps we can take to avoid community outbreak. Given self isolation is so important, we want to make it as easy as

possible. As such, we will be introducing a range of measures to assist with self isolation. Expect more on this again early next week. We will also increase community support to those unable to support themselves in self isolation. In addition to these measures, and as I said, the Finance Minister will be announcing the business continuity package next week. The health minister will also announce a suite of additional health measures to scale up the responsiveness of our health system to the virus and the public information campaign that has already begun, but they will continue to scale up.

Ultimately though, the best protection for the economy is containing the virus. A widespread outbreak will hurt our economy far more in the long run than short term measures to prevent a mass outbreak occurring. These measures, while disruptive, are needed to make the space we need as a nation to prepare, manage the spread and as I said, flatten the curve. We all have obligations though to limit the spread of the virus and basic public health measures are at the heart of it. In order, however, to limit the risk of community outbreak when people are in close proximity to each other, we will also be announcing further guidelines on mass gatherings. For now, you'll be aware Pacifica and March 15 Memorial has been cancelled. The guidance we will be developing more broadly on these gatherings will be based on the following criteria. Large events of people in close proximity, events where people are more likely to be in physical contact, events where participants have travelled from overseas or where there is a known a likelihood of a large group having travelled from overseas and non-ticketed events, since there's no seat allocation because that does make the job of trade contact tracing that much harder. Again, advice and criteria on mass gatherings will be released next week. For those who need more immediate advice because you may for instance be hosting a mass gathering, contact your local public health unit.

In conclusion, we have two choices as a nation. One is to lead COVID-19 roll on and simply to brass. The second is to go hard on measures to keep it out and stamp it out. Not because we can stop the global pandemic from reaching us, but because it is in our power to slow it down. I make no apology for choosing the second path. New Zealanders Public Health comes first. If we have that, we can recover from the impacts on the economy. We can recover from the impacts on tourism, and we can recover from the impacts on our airlines. Finally, this is an unprecedented time. While we don't have community transmission here, now is the time to prepare, and we can all play a role in it. So here are my requests of New Zealanders just to conclude: one, wash your hands, two, if you don't need to travel overseas, then don't enjoy your own backyard for a time. Three, wash your hands, four, at your second stay home, five, if you sneeze, do it into your elbow, six, wash your hands. Seven, stop handshakes, hugs and holding. I know this is counter to who we are as a nation, but the best thing that we can do right now is to show love and affection to one another is to switch to the East Coast way. If you don't know what that is, find an East Coaster, and eight please be mindful of the oldest citizens in your life, check on the older, but if you're sick, keep your distance. Finally, we are a tough, resilient people. We have been here before, but our journey will depend on how we work together. We are taking every measure we need as a government and every step we can as a government and we're taking them early. We ask that you do that too. We all have a role to play. Look out for the neighbor, look out for your family, look out for your friends. Look after your family, look after your older ones, we are all in this together.

#### **Speech 4: March 16 (JA4)**

All right, good afternoon. As you can imagine, the Government's sole focus this week, as in previous weeks, is protecting New Zealanders' health and economic wellbeing amid the global COVID-19 pandemic. On Tuesday, Minister of Finance, Grant Robertson, will announce phase one of the Government's economic response, including our business continuity package. This package will be significant and focused at keeping New Zealanders in work and to support businesses from the impact of the virus. On Wednesday, we will launch a mass public awareness campaign that calls on New Zealanders to unite against COVID-19. On Thursday, I travel to Rotorua with Minister Robertson to speak directly with businesses who are or will be impacted by COVID-19 and the measures we are undertaking to do as much as we can to support New Zealanders through this unprecedented period.

Today, most people in New Zealand were able to get up and go to work. This is not necessarily the case around the world, certainly not in Italy nor in Spain or other countries that are experiencing massive outbreaks of COVID-19—countries whose economies are, effectively, shutting down. It was with this in mind that we took decisive action at the weekend to go hard and to go early, to prioritize New Zealanders' health by requiring everyone coming into our

country, other than those from the Pacific, to self-isolate for 14 days. This obviously came into effect this morning. We banned cruise ships from New Zealand. We stepped up our health measures at the border. Slowing the transmission of COVID-19 and focusing on the health of New Zealanders is our best possible weapon in securing our economy for the long run.

We know that the significant effect this global outbreak is having on the world economy is having an effect here too. We are working around the clock to ensure our economic package will focus relentlessly on jobs, on supporting businesses to keep people in work as they plan for the future, and on ensuring our health system has the resources it needs and helping our most vulnerable. This will be phase one. There will be more to our response, but I want to ensure New Zealanders fully understand the damage this virus can cause, both to health and the economy, and the approach the Government is taking is to ultimately lessen what will be significant effects.

While I will leave the Minister of Finance to talk in more detail tomorrow, the preliminary advice I have received from the Treasury this weekend is that the economic impact of the virus on New Zealand could be greater than the impact of the global financial crisis. The difference, of course, is that there is no existing playbook for the economic response here.

Of course, at this point, we cannot be sure of the impact, but we can be sure it will be significant. What tomorrow's package will do is demonstrate that we are willing to act decisively to give as much certainty as we can in uncertain times, and that the hard work we put in during our first years in office to get debt low has meant that we are prepared for this rainy day.

I want to speak briefly to the issue of mass gatherings. Within the next month, approximately 107 events that are each expecting over 1,000 attendees are scheduled to take place in Auckland, Waikato, Wellington, and Christchurch alone. Our job as a Government is to limit the potential spread of the virus to ensure the health of New Zealanders. As I've likened it to before, it's about flattening the curve or, as I've heard some say, instead of a tidal wave, reducing it down to a number of small, manageable waves. That is our focus.

To slow the spread of COVID-19, reducing the number of people infected, and to protect those who are more vulnerable to severe illness, today Cabinet agreed that gatherings of 500 or more people, held outdoors or indoors, should be cancelled. This applies to nonessential events such as festivals, fairs, sporting, religious, and cultural events.

While it currently excludes schools and universities, the Ministry of Education will be working with these institutions to reduce these gatherings as they are able to. I'm advised this initial criteria will capture the bulk of events coming up over the next few weeks and give those event organizers certainty. But these are not the only requirements we will be setting out on mass gatherings.

Today we focused on larger gatherings. There will be further guidance issued later in the week, and we will be very, very clear in developing that guidance that it gives a really clear pathway to help event organizers to determine whether they can mitigate some of the issues around larger gatherings or whether or not they should indeed be cancelled. That will be the focus of further work this week.

Ultimately, though, I know that this decision is hugely disappointing. I know it will have an impact on a large number of communities. I'm acutely aware, as the Minister for Arts, Culture, and Heritage, the impact this will have on the arts sector, but we are making this decision in the best interests of New Zealanders.

Finally, I want to comment on border issues. There will be zero tolerance for those who do not follow the rules of self-isolation. Cabinet has given approval for temporary visa holders—those entering into New Zealand—to be liable for detention and deportation if they do not comply with instructions from a medical officer of health relating to a quarantinable or infectious disease. This reinforces how serious we are about protecting the health of New Zealanders and will encourage visitors to comply with our rules or leave voluntarily if they don't wish to do so. Remember that anyone who is deported faces serious and ongoing consequences including high chances of being refused future visa applications here and in many other countries.

I consider this really a message and warning to those who choose to come to New Zealand. We are a country who take our roles and responsibility of being hospitable to guests very, very seriously. But in return we ask that visitors reciprocate. We will look after you if you look after us. If you come here and have no intention of following our requirements to self-isolate, frankly, you are not welcome and you should leave before you are deported.

Finally, I confirm that I will no longer travel to Vietnam in April. This will be obvious to most of you. This is following, though, Vietnam—the Government's decision over the weekend to postpone the ASEAN leaders week, including the ASEAN - New Zealand commemorative summit. We are now open to taking your questions.

### **Speech 5: March 18 (JA5)**

Kia ora everyone! As you will have seen both in the news here in New Zealand and the news will be reading from abroad we are in a really unprecedented time at the moment. COVID-19 is unlike anything that we've had to experience before, and early projections are that it will be worse than the GFC in terms of economic impact.

We've already acted decisively, gone hard and gone early to protect New Zealanders' health. We went hard on our response and now we need to go hard in these, since it will provide businesses, families and workers who will be impacted by COVID-19.

We're a nation that thrives from our tourism industry and everyone will see that the impact that has been had there is heavy.

And there will be other areas affected. Hospitality, forestry and, in fact it's hard to predict just how many will be affected, but we know it will be significant. That's why today we've announced an economic package designed to cushion the blow of COVID-19, and to support businesses and employers as much as we can as we weather the storm.

We're well positioned to do this. When we came into office, we focused on getting debt down, and because we've done that, we're now prepared for the rainy day that's arrived. The package we've announced today has just over \$12 billion worth. It is divided across three areas. First is a 1/2 billion dollar investment in health to increase for instance, testing stations, making sure that we are ready for an increase in need in our hospitals and generally preparing our health services for COVID-19. The second area is business certainty and continuity. We know businesses will be facing the impacts and that's why we've created a wage subsidy so that those who are affected the most will receive support directly from the government to help them keep their staff on. We've also wanted to make sure that they can see we're supporting them through the other side and preparing for recovery, so there are other elements of the package designed to support that.

The third area is income support and consumer spending, we need to keep the wheels of the economy moving and the best way to do that is to make sure that those on the lowest incomes are getting the income support they need because they are the most likely to go and then spin it in our economy. And that's why that package includes things like lifts in the winter energy payment and additional support for those on low incomes and government support. We know that this is going to take some time for all of the globe to recover from COVID-19 and there will be, for instance more cases in New Zealand, but I hope as you can see we are prepared. We've planned for this and we are ready, and if we work together we will get through it. That's why now my request is to you, to unite against COVID-19 the government is doing our bit, now we're asking you to do yours. Make sure you follow those basic health principles. Wash your hands, cover your sneeze and if you're sick, stay home. If there are older people in your life, make sure that you look out for them. If your neighbors are self-isolating, check if they need anything and finally, to support our businesses and our economy, if you're shopping by local, we will get through this and we'll get through it together.



### **Speech 6: March 19 (JA6)**

Good evening. Cabinet met this afternoon to assist the rapidly evolving situation relating to COVID-19 and made further decisions to protect New Zealanders from the virus. While there remains no evidence of community outbreak in New Zealand to date, there continues to be significant outbreaks in other countries and that poses health risks for New Zealanders, as most cases recorded to date relate to people travelling here and bringing the virus with them. While the majority have been returning New Zealanders, that has not always been the case. Therefore, we need to continue to make further decisions and further restrictions to limit the risk of people bringing the virus into New Zealand. From 11:59 PM tonight we will close our border to any non-residents attempting to travel here. This will stop tourists or temporary visa holders, including students or temporary workers, from coming to and entering into New Zealand. New Zealand citizens and permanent residents will be able to return, and of course, that includes the children and partners of citizens and permanent residents. These changes will also apply to the Pacific, they had previously been exempted. With the first case of COVID-19 in the Pacific now recorded, it's clear we need to take even stronger measures to protect our Pacific family too. A small number of exemptions will remain for the Pacific particularly around those who may need to travel here for humanitarian reasons. There will also be exemptions for key workers in the health sector.

Protecting New Zealanders from COVID-19 is our number one priority. To do that, we need to slow it down. Self-isolation is key to our success. All of the evidence to date is that returning New Zealanders understand the requirement for self-isolation, and the spot checks have demonstrated that. But I've been increasingly concerned that visitors to New Zealand have not necessarily adequately self-isolated for 14 days, or are choosing not to and that is an unacceptable risk that we must end. With each day there are new developments in the global situation. New Zealand has sought to stay ahead of the curve and make decisions prior to other countries, and we do so again. The government understands that this decision will have further impacts on our economy. But by focusing on people's health, we also help our economy. A country in lockdown devastated by COVID-19 hurts our people and it also hurts our jobs. But we can continue to support businesses to weather the storm created by the virus. That is why we have put in place New Zealand's most significant peacetime economic response package and will support Kiwi jobs and the domestic economy from COVID-19. I want to acknowledge that in no time in New Zealand's history has a power like this been used, and I recognize how extraordinary it is. But we have to make decisions in the best interest of the health of those who live here, whether they be young or old, whether they are newly arrived or preeminent. If we slow down COVID-19, if we break it into small waves of cases rather than the overwhelming number experienced in other countries, that is how we help our jobs and economy too. One final point I wish to make. This applies to people, not products. Those who continue to staff flights that are transporting freight or who continue to navigate the sea freight that comes into New Zealand will still be able to travel. This is the way it will be stocked. There is no reason to panic by. Have a plan and prepare, but do so knowing that our supermarkets will continue to have food on their shelves if you give them the time to restock them. I'm now happy to take questions.

### **Speech 7: March 21 (JA7)**

Good afternoon everyone. Thank you for joining us. We're happy to take questions based on what you will have heard me announce at midday. What I want to first set out is that the framework from which the announcement was based is available at [COVID-19.govt.nz](https://www.covid-19.govt.nz). People can clearly see the alert system and the different expectations at different points in that alert system. What I want to acknowledge is that obviously there is great interest in the system and the information provided today, so there is increased demand on the website currently. I do just want to let people know this will be available on social media, a range of different outlets and will continue to be available throughout the course of the day, and obviously the coming week in the first instance.

For those who have indirect needs, please do look first at the website to see extra information about how it may affect you. Leave health line for those more immediate needs. This is one way that we can make sure that those who need assistance and support directly are able to get through. I say that knowing having no information on demand on those lines, but certainly just anticipating based on what we've seen to date from new information in the community. For now though I will direct to the Director General of Health.

## **Speech 8: March 23 (JA8)**

Good afternoon. Cabinet met this morning to discuss our next actions in the fight against COVID-19. Like the rest of the world, we are facing the potential for devastating impacts from this virus. But through decisive action, and by working together, we do have a small window to get ahead of it. On Saturday, I announced a COVID-19 alert level system, placed New Zealand at alert Level 2. I also said we should all be prepared to move quickly, now is the time to put our plans into action. We are fortunate to still be somewhat behind the majority of overseas countries in terms of cases. But the trajectory is very clear: act now, or risk the virus taking hold as it has elsewhere. We currently have 102 cases. But so did Italy once. Now the virus has overwhelmed their health system, the people are dying every day. The situation here is moving at a pace, and so must we. We have always said we would act early, decisively and go hard and we will.

Today, 36 new cases were announced, while the majority of these cases continue to be linked to overseas travel in some way, I can also confirm, as did the Director General of Health, that we have two cases where public health officials have been unable to find how they came in contact with COVID-19. On that basis, we now consider there is transmission within our communities. If community transmission takes off in New Zealand, the number of cases will double every five days. If that happens unchecked, our health system will be inundated, and tens of thousands of New Zealanders will die. There is no easy way to save it, but it is the reality that we have seen overseas and the possibility that we must face here.

Together we must stop that from happening and we can. Right now we have a window of opportunity to slow transmission, to contain the virus, to stop it multiplying and to protect New Zealanders from the worst. Our plan is simple. We can stop the spread by staying at home and reducing contact. Now is the time to act. That's why cabinet met today and agreed that effective immediately we will move to alert Level 3 nationwide. After 48 hours, the time required to ensure essential services are in place we will move to level 4. These decisions will place the most significant restrictions on New Zealanders' movements in modern history. This is not a decision taken lightly. But it is our best chance to beat the virus and to save lives. Let me set out what this will mean for everyone and practical terms. Supermarkets, doctors, pharmacies, service stations, access to essential banking services will be available throughout the day at every alert level. If you do not have immediate needs, do not go to the supermarket. It will be there for you today, it will be there for you tomorrow and the day after that. We must give time for supermarkets to restock their shelves. There will be enough for everyone if we shop normally. Stock is not an issue in New Zealand, we will not run out of food.

In the meantime, we will be working through practices like those used overseas to make sure that when people are visiting essential services, that we are maintaining social distance at all times. Non-essential businesses in New Zealand must now close. All bars, restaurants, cafes, cinemas, pools, museums, libraries, playgrounds, any other place where the public must close their face-to-face function. Over the next 48 hours, those who provide, for instance, take away services must move to close their operations also. All indoor and outdoor events cannot proceed. In short, we are all now preparing as a nation, to go into self-isolation, in the same way that we have seen many other countries do. Staying out of crowds is a simple but highly effective way to constrain the virus. It denies it a place to go and will help give our healthcare system a fighting chance. Over the next 48 hours, every workplace must implement alternative ways of working. People must work from home so that interactions with others are limited. Essential services will need to put in place alternative ways of working that ensure physical distancing of staff of two meters, provide personal protective equipment. Schools will be closed from tomorrow. Except to the children, essential workers such as doctors, nurses, ambulance drivers, police and there will be others on that list. This will give them time to plan, but it will be temporary. Schools will close entirely from midnight on Wednesday. The school term will be broken and brought forward. For the remainder of the term, schools will establish ways to teaching online and remotely, all students across the country are currently being given information on this decision for their parents, including the list of who is considered an essential service. This will be communicated directly to parents as well. I ask those who are outside essential services to stay at home and to stop all interaction with others outside of those in your household. I understand that self-isolation is a daunting prospect so we are being practical. You can leave your home for fresh air, a walk for exercise to take your children outside, but please remember this simple

principle: we are asking you only spend time with those who are in self isolation with. And if you are outside, keep your distance from others. That means 2 meters at all times. This is the single most important thing we can do right now to stop further community transmission.

Travel around New Zealand will also change. Over the next 48 hours, people will need to go home. Be it locally or throughout the country. We have asked all air transport providers to ensure social distancing for that period. After 48 hours, we'll be moving to air travel, only applying to the transport of people undertaking essential services and the transport of freight. Public transport will also begin to transition over the next 48 hours, will only be available for those working in essential services for medical reasons and to move essential goods between the North and South Island. Further details on the transition we are all now making will be made publicly available on the COVID-19 website.

Now I want to share with you what will happen while we are all in alert level 4 to get ahead of COVID-19. We will continue to vigorously contact trace every single case. Testing will continue at pace to help us understand the current number of cases in New Zealand and where they are based. If we flash out the cases we already have and see transmission slow, we will potentially be able to move areas out of level 4 over time. But for the next wee while, things will look worse before they look better. In the short term, the number of cases will likely rise because the virus is already in our community, but these new measures are meant to keep numbers down and prevent our health system from being overwhelmed and ultimately save lives. To be successful though, to stop community transmission, which does have a lag time, these measures will need to be in place for four weeks. Again, I want to reiterate to you, you will be able to make regular visits to essential services in that time. Your supermarkets will not close, your pharmacy, pharmaceutical products will be available. You will be able to access medical services. If we, after those four weeks have been successful, I hope then we will be able to ease these restrictions. If we haven't, we'll find ourselves living with them for longer. That is why sticking to the rules matters. If we don't, if you hang out with your friend at a park or see a family member for lunch, you risk spreading COVID-19 and stay in level 4. Our low number of cases compared to the rest of the world gives us a chance that many others do not have. But it does not mean we have escaped. I do not underestimate what I'm asking New Zealanders to do. It is huge. And I know it will be daunting, it is the hardest choice that we have faced as government. Medical modelling considered by cabinet today suggested that without the measures I have just announced up to tens of thousands of New Zealanders could die from COVID-19. Everything you will all give up for the next few weeks, all of the lost contact with others, all of the isolation and difficult time entertaining children, it will literally save lives. Thousands of lives. The worst-case scenario, it would represent the greatest loss of New Zealanders lives in our history, and I will not take that chance. I would rather make this decision now and save those lives and be in lockdown for a shorter period than delay and see New Zealanders lose loved ones, and they contact with each other for an even longer period. I hope that you are all with me in this decision. Together we do have an opportunity to contain the spread and to prevent the worst. I cannot stress enough the need for every New Zealander to follow the advice I've laid out for you today.

As a government, we will, and I hope you have seen this: we will do everything in our power to protect you. Now I'm asking you to do everything you can to protect all of us. None of us can do this alone. Your actions will be critical to our collective effort to stop COVID-19. Failure of anyone to play their part in coming days will put the lives of others at risk and there will be no tolerance for that. We will not hesitate to use our enforcement powers if needed. We are in this together. I'm in no doubt that the measures I've announced today will cause unprecedented economic and social disruption, but they are necessary. I have one final message. Be kind. I know people will want to act as enforcers, and I understand that people are afraid and they're anxious, but we, we will play the role of enforcer. What we need from you, our community, is you to support others. Go home tonight and check on your neighbors. Start a phone tree with your street, plan how you'll keep in touch with one another. We will get through this together. But only if we stick together. So please be strong and be kind. I'm not going to hand over to the Minister of Finance to sit out the additional support measures agreed by Cabinet today, to provide income guarantees to those whose livelihood is disrupted by the virus. Straight after that, we will take your questions. I'll then hand over to Minister Hipkins, who will talk through some of the specific decisions as they relate to education. Following that later this afternoon we will be making available Commissioner of Police Mike Bosch, who has been playing a key role in the operational side of our response to covid-19, and John Omblet, the controller of all of government response to speak with you and answer any additional operational questions that you may have on the announcement that I

have made this afternoon. We will continue to provide that information as swiftly as we can, but you'll also see we are acting swiftly, we are acting decisively. We continue to go hard and go early. I hand over now to Grant Robertson.

### **Speech 9: March 24 (JA9)**

I'm bearing some positive news, one of the questions I've been asked most frequently is we've been announcing new cases of COVID-19 in New Zealand has been, how many have recovered.

Now for some COVID-19 will be an illness they experience for a time, but we do have an official protocol around the clearing individuals to have fully recovered and we will start reporting on that, so I can now tell you that of the New Zealanders who have been diagnosed with COVID-19, 12 have now fully recovered. I expect obviously that number to continue to increase.

[...] They are able to recover at home if they are able, in order to make sure we leave our hospitals for those experiencing the worst effects. And for those interested, the latest number of individuals who are currently requiring hospital care, I understand, is 6, but that none of those are require the treatment provided through ICU or through our high dependency units. Now let me run through a few updates on the government's preparations, unprecedented position of being on alert level 4 in New Zealand.

First segment I'd make is that the underlying principle for alert level 4 is to reduce down contact between people to the bare minimum, essential services contact only. That means the simplest thing New Zealanders can do to stop the spread of this virus is to stay at home. That's how we will save lives. I [...] and other people is key to our response at this level. Now, of course some New Zealanders will still be needed to operate our essential services. Those who provide the necessities of life such as our frontline health workers and police being obvious examples. And to these people, every one of us owes a debt of gratitude. And I can tell you that we can repay that debt of gratitude now by staying at home. Every interaction we have with someone else increases the risk of the spread of the virus and you can see that for instance in the spread of some of our cases, you'll see a cluster of cases have come from one conference and that gives you a little bit of an insight into why we are trying to share that message so strongly, reduce contact, reduce risk, reduce the spread. If you are not an essential worker, but you try to go to work, or you carry on as usual, you are literally putting at risk those who have to be there like our hospital workers.

Now I know there continue to be questions and they are understandable. Countries are facing them the world over, as we move into this never before seen status in New Zealand of essentially shutting down normal life. But we are making good progress and we do have time to work through some of the questions that will remain. But I'll start with a few common ones first. People have asked if they can leave their house to go for a walk, yes, but again we ask people to stay 2 meters away from anyone you'll pass, do not congregate. It comes down again to those very simple principles. If you are completely isolated, if you live alone, but you have one person you have contact with, that needs to be just that, a person you stay faithful to and stays, and they stay faithful to you in turn. If you have multiple contacts with others, that is where the risk increases, and we cannot afford that. It ruins the entire purpose of alert level 4. You can drive locally to go to your supermarket to get food, but again we ask that you maintain your physical distance again, two meters from others who may be undertaking essential errands or getting a bit of fresh air as well. Other than that, we do ask people to stay at home. This is life that will be different. It will not be normal. It will not feel normal, but that is what we have to do to beat the virus. I know there have also been many questions on essential services and again we are in self isolation to limit the chances of virus has to spread. The more businesses that stay open the more chances it has to spread. Our whole strategy at level 4 is to eliminate that. I have the same talk around what constitutes essential services and the COVID committee is working through some of those key questions and they'll be further updates again on that tomorrow. Also, we will be ready to be responsive.

If once we're at alert level 4, we discover that there are essential services that have not been made available, we will be ready to respond and react to that as we go and I want to assure people of that, but our starting point has to be that we have as many closures as possible to maintain alert level 4, but to provide for the essentials of life. We have never shut down our country before. So I will ask people to work with us as we go through this unprecedented step, MBS leading this work and talking to businesses closely around some of the implications for them. But again,

first port of call is the COVID-19 website. I do want to reiterate the basic principles we're working to, though, we must make sure we've got those services that enable us to scale up our response to COVID-19. So people who manufacture PPE or who are providing important products for our hospital services. We must ensure these necessities of life for New Zealanders. They have to be able to access our pharmaceutical products, food and basic banking services. And we must maintain public health and security. If you're not doing those things, we are asking you to close. It's already being briefed by the Speaker, Parliament will sit tomorrow. We will debate the epidemic notice and seek to pass a state of emergency, both which provides us the powers for government to move the country to level 4. The epidemic notice was gazetted today and ensures that temporary visas are automatically extended to late September. Travelers with a temporary work student visit and the interim and limited visa expiring before 1 April 2020 who are unable to leave New Zealand, will be able to stay legally. Travelers with a temporary visa due to expire between 1 April and 9 July will have the visas extended to late September and confirmation of these extensions will be emailed to visa holders. Detailed information is available on the Immigration New Zealand website, will also be making it available on the COVID-19 website. Anyone in New Zealand who's concerned about their visa, although they should be covered by these measures, should get in touch with immigration New Zealand. And finally, before I hand over to the Finance Minister, I would reiterate what I said yesterday, and this event is unprecedented in New Zealand's history. Never before have we sought to shut down our country in the space of 48 hours, and I want to thank those who have worked so diligently to help support that transition for all New Zealanders. We will know, take a commonsense approach. We'll make sure that people can get home if they're at a ferry terminal or get a flight if the only way they can get at home, from Dunedin to Auckland, is via air travel. We will work calmly and sensibly through all of those issues as we go, but I simply wasn't willing to wait until we could answer every single question on some of these logistical challenges before we moved to level 4. Every day we waited would have been more time that COVID-19 could spread in our community, so we will work through this as we transition. That is the best way that we can assure the New Zealand public that we are protecting their public health with urgency. And that's exactly what we're doing and it's refining.

#### **Speech 10: March 25 (JA10)**

And so we enter into a stage that none of us have experienced before, I wanted to share a few final messages. I want to see share the same messages I've just shared in Parliament. Firstly, you are not alone, you will hear us and see us daily as we guide New Zealand through this. It won't always be perfect, but the principle of what we are doing is the right one. Secondly, success won't be instant. The benefit of what we do today won't be felt for many days to come. Expect our numbers to keep rising because they will. In fact, modeling suggests we could have several thousand cases before we see the measures we're taking today having an impact, but overtime we will see change if we all stick to the rules. Thirdly, you may not be at work, but that doesn't mean you don't have a job. Your job is to save lives and you can do that by staying home and breaking the chain. And finally, if you have any questions about what you can or can't do, and you're looking for answers, apply a simple principle: act like you have COVID-19. Every move you make could be a risk to someone else. That is how we must all collectively think now. So New Zealand, remember to be calm, be kind, stay at home. We can break the chain.

#### **Speech 11: March 29 (JA11)**

Good evening everyone!

I'm here in the Beehive where periodically I am coming over to use what's called the Beehive Theatre rate. It's the space that you will have seen on the news from time to time over these, particularly over these past few weeks, where we have a couple of podiums set up and where we are still talking directly to the media and through this period of self-isolation will keep doing that. So that's downstairs here in the Beehive. I can tell you that we were in that space. Everyone who is there is reduced down. There's a small number in that room and they're all separated and when they come into that room they have to give their details so we know who is there every day in case anything happens and we need to contact tracing anyone.

So whilst I'm here sitting at my desk in the Beehive, it is very quiet, this place has ended out as you would expect, we've got the same expectations on the people who work here, in government, as we have on all of the public, so most people, the vast majority are now working from home and I have a very small bubble of people that I work with to keep the country going.

So the reason that I'm coming to you from here is because a few hours ago I came from the Beehive Theatre at downstairs at place C on television, to stand with the Director General of Health as we share the very, very sad news that we have lost now our first New Zealander to a COVID-19. I know that the entire nation will be thinking of that family right now and wanting to respect their privacy, but we have shared just a little bit of information that the person who has sadly passed away was on the West Coast and did have some significant other health issues. That does not diminish at all the devastation that everyone obviously feels about that loss. But again, I think highlights why it is so important that we're doing what we're all doing right now, and that is staying at home, breaking that chain of transmission. Early indications are that the person that we lost today, that there is a connection to international travel. But that's something the Ministry of Health is still working through as well.

So you might have seen the update on numbers again today, but I thought I'd just repeat them for all of you. We now have officially 514 people who have COVID-19 in New Zealand and 56 of those have officially now recovered. Of those we've had in total of our cases, and we've had 28 who have been hospitalized, and so relatively speaking of course, that hasn't placed too much demand on our health services. And that's something that they are absolutely able to cope with but the whole goal, the reason we're doing what we're doing now is so that we can make sure that for those cases that people were treated they need to be treated in it and they're able to access the care that they need. If our health services are overwhelmed, and that's when we have huge, huge issues. So that's why it's so important that we all during elite level 4 are all staying at home breaking that chain of transmission, making sure that we help save lives together.

Now one of the other issues I wanted to touch on today is the issue of enforcement and forgive me, I can see under the screen that quite a lot of questions are being asked, but I'm just going to get out of this one key piece of information and I'll scroll through afterwards and see what questions I have missed. But one piece of information I want to share. I know a lot of people because I do look at my Facebook messages and comments, I know a lot of people are concerned about people who might not be following the rules right now. And I know that, especially frustrating when you are and you see that others are not. The police are particularly mindful of this as well. We had over in two days, we had over 2000 calls to 111 of people who just wanted to report that people weren't following the rules. So what we wanna do is make sure we don't use 111 for that and because of course we want to be able to use that for critical callouts. So instead, the police have created a place where online you can report if you're aware of anyone who's breaching the rules of alert level 4, whether it's a business that's open there shouldn't be, or if someone just isn't following self isolation. Again, remember, people are allowed to go for a walk or walk around the block, but if you hear, for instance, a party on your street that you're worried about, something that shouldn't be happening, people clearly getting together, then you can report that by jumping onto [105.police.govt.nz](https://www.105.police.govt.nz). That detail again is [105.police.govt.nz](https://www.105.police.govt.nz). And so that's a way that you can just report anything that you're a bit worried about, that you may see and no longer need to use 111 to report that. I can also assure you I know you'll be. Many people have commented on how we really making sure that the people, for instance, who have come in from overseas in particular, are self-isolating from the 27th of March. So a couple of days ago we've had over 1700 police checks or people knocking police knocking on people's doors to check that they are in self isolation and that is just one of the things that we've been doing to make sure that people are following the rules that that we have. I know that this, that the border restrictions are really tough, I can see a couple of messages there around where they're having a really hard impact on people, but they are so necessary at this particular time. Because that is our highest risk area, it's people who are coming in from overseas New Zealand is coming home who for no fault of their own may have come in contact with COVID and so we need to make sure that we look after them, but that we also look after everyone back here already so we have those quiet stringent controls at the border.

Now to anyone who knows anyone or if you're listening and you're in New Zealand or who is going to is coming home soon and those numbers have dropped away considerably. We're only on the last count. I'm expecting roughly 300ish people to come into New Zealand today, and many of those are from Australia. For those people you must have a plan, I cannot emphasize that enough. You will be interviewed when you arrive in New Zealand, and if you do

not have a plan for self-isolation, a way to get home appropriately and to stay in self isolation, you will be placed essentially into quarantine. I know many people have been upset by that, but we have to take these really strong measures to make sure that we're looking after you and people around you.

Ultimately though, I hope this gives you a little bit of an insight into some of the things that we've been putting in place to make sure that people follow the rules and that people are well supported through this really tough period. I see someone who's just been asking whether or not people will be getting a break from working in our supermarkets. Of course, our supermarkets by and large work seven days a week and schedule people so that they are able to take breaks and that's really important. I think I've mentioned very briefly before, I used to work at a supermarket, and you know those days can be really long when you're really busy and particularly I can only imagine what it's like to work there now. So please, if you are going to a supermarket. Please be patient. Please be kind to the people who are serving you. Tomorrow I will give a really specific update on some of the specific questions we've had about supermarkets. Will they be opened over Easter? It's a question that's being asked and we're working through some of the details on that, to make sure, of course that we're giving time also for shelves to be restocked, and so will they be open over Easter is a question and do we have any shortages? What are we doing about price gouging? So I'll be giving a little bit more detail tomorrow on some of those issues. Ultimately, though, I really hope you're all looking after yourselves, and for those of you who have been down in Wellington, it's been some pretty rough weather this weekend, and so I know people wouldn't have got much fresh air out. I don't know about much at all, and so I do. Hope you're looking after yourself. I've seen lots of ideas online about how to look after your mental health and wellbeing during this period. So I really encourage you to take some of those ideas up because we've got a while and we will be going through this together. So do take very good care of yourselves. Otherwise I'll be back online soon to share with you the latest updates and information. But till then thanks everyone for tuning in and take care.

### **Speech 12: March 30 (JA12)**

As you will have heard from the director general earlier this afternoon, we now have a total of 589 cases of COVID-19 in New Zealand. It's an increase of 76 new cases today, 12 of which are in hospital with two currently in the ICU. As I have said we expected the numbers to rise and to keep rising for the next week or so. The growing number of cases in a particular the number of clusters of cases highlight why we need to take the lockdown we are currently at very seriously. The virus once present has proven it can spread easily, at a school, at a wedding, at a conference, or even at a local bar. These are all commonplace gatherings we normally take for granted, but have proven to be a place where this virus can spread successfully.

Cabinet met today via a zoom meeting, which is something I'm sure many of you have been utilizing also in the past week. As far as I'm aware, this is possibly the first time cabinet has ever met in this way. A range of matters were discussed, including updates on the wage subsidy. Currently we have provided \$3.7 million benefitting just over 580,000 employees.

I want to come back to the issue of supermarkets today, which has been a topic of much discussion, including here amongst all of you. You will have heard reports and anecdote about price gouging, as have I. Our officials are in daily contact with our major supermarkets. And while we have found no evidence, we are setting up a channel where people can report any cases or concerns that they may have. I'm aware, for instance that there've been incidents of fresh produce price increases. We do need to be aware that these could simply reflect seasonal fluctuations. However, during a period in which there is less competition in the food retail sector and increased demand, it is more important than ever that prices are fair and reasonable. As such, we've created a reporting mechanism for the public. Price watch@ MB.govt.NZ., I want to repeat that again, Price watch at ML.govt.NZ. A simple email address dedicated to reporting of potential price gouging. I've already seen some reports made online on social media. Now I ask those individuals if you can specifically send those reports, say a copy of your receipt, a simple photo of what you've seen directly through to MB. This will enable us to make sure we are properly investigating any reports of price gouging. No one wants to see anyone take unfair financial advantage from this extraordinary period. To be clear, it is not illegal for businesses to increase their prices, but the Fair Trading Act prohibits misleading and

deceptive conduct and false representation. This means that if a business gives a reason for a price increase, it must be true. Otherwise the business risks breaching the Fair Trading Act and this will be enforced.

The second issue we continue to consider is the issue of Easter trading, which primarily impacts on Good Friday. We are continuing to liaise with operators on this issue and with representatives of their workforce. It's very important to us we also have the views of those who are working in our supermarket chains. I do expect a final decision tomorrow, but I do want to flag that one of the issues currently being raised by operators is the need to restock shelves. I know we're all keen to make sure that when people make a trip to the supermarket, that they can get what they need, rather than making multiple journeys. All of this is being factored into the decision-making process, and as I've said, I speak to clarify the position on Easter trading tomorrow. I should note that dairies are already able to open through this entire period, so no matter what they will be available for trading.

I can also update you on the matter the Minister of Finance signaled last week around sick leave support for people working in essential services. It is critical during this time of level 4 lockdown that employees of essential services are able to take leave when they cannot work particularly vulnerable people who should be self-isolating. The risk is that if these workers cannot work from home, have exhausted their sick leave, or don't have income support, they might feel pressured to keep going to work. We do not want that. Obviously, not all central service workers will be in this position, but for those who are, it is a serious problem if they could be left without income for the period that they have to stay away from work. We are urgently working on guidance in this area. It was one of the issues discussed by Cabinet today. In the meantime, though, I am pleased to see the decision by food staffs and progressives who are one of the key areas where this concern has been raised and they have said that all vulnerable workers will not be required to work and will be paid over the four-week period that we are that we are at alert level 4. I see this as good practice and best practice vulnerable workers and our essential workforce should not be on the frontline in their way.

Finally, I want to say particularly thank you to those New Zealanders who are returning to our health workforce to help with the COVID-19 response. Those who had retired or had left for other reasons. 6126 health professionals have now registered to support their colleagues offering to work in a range of roles, including as doctors, nurses and care and support workers. Some who have literally only just retired or changed their careers. At a time when New Zealand needs its medical workforce to be at its most prepared, I say thank you for bringing your expertise back to the frontline. And more broadly, I would also like to thank New Zealanders for the way that they are treating the level 4 lockdown. The vast majority are doing a great job complying with the rules. Unfortunately, there are some people who are failing to act responsibly, and I want to say very clearly. The police argued up around enforcement and they have been and will continue to act. This is not a time to look for ways out. It is not a time to bend the rules. This is a time to stay at home and to save lives. Now I'm very happy to take your questions.

### **Speech 13: March 31 (JA13)**

The routine of press conferences that everyone is becoming familiar with this, so we primarily proceed. And this morning, maybe we need to make a slight adjustment to the Director generals update, but we will try to avoid as much as we can disruption to the schedule that people are becoming used to. Before I start, I do want to acknowledge that I do not underestimate the difficulty of the challenge of being an alert level 4 for families, for those living on their own, for anyone in New Zealand right now.

While we are doing all we can to stop the spread of the virus, we are also aware of our need to do all we can to make the experience of those at home the best it can be. As some of you will have heard there has been a very welcome announcement made last night that if accepted with the recent years offshore, New Zealand workers in Australia will be eligible for Australia's wage subsidy scheme. This is likely to help significant numbers of New Zealanders and I'm pleased to see this recognition that New Zealanders and Australia make a really important contribution to Australian economy. I've spoken to Prime Minister Morrison several times to make the case for helping New Zealanders and Australia, including people at work, but also those who lose their job to COVID-19, and most recently a conversation yesterday morning. The Deputy Prime Minister had also spoken to his Australian Foreign Affairs



counterpart on this matter, and the team at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade has been doing an excellent job of raising the issue also within the Australian system.

I should add that we have done the same in terms of support for Australians here in New Zealand. New Zealand is supporting Australians who work in pay taxi by giving them access to our wage subsidy package. Australians are also eligible for social welfare in New Zealand after they have lived here for two years. Ideally, we would like to still see their full access available in Australia, but in the meantime, we are incredibly pleased to see an exception has been made for the wage subsidy.

Of course, at home, the government's COVID-19 committee met today so I can update you on several decisions that ministers have made. First, the state of national emergency put in place to help stop the spread of COVID-19 has been extended for a further seven days. The initial declaration on March 25<sup>th</sup> lasted 7 days and can be extended as many times as necessary. Extension ensures the continuity of the resources, support and powers needed to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in our communities. This includes ensuring our civil defense, Emergency Management workers can carry out critical work, including managing roads, traffic and public places, issuing first aid, and the provision of food, shelter and accommodation. The committee also had further discussions about Easter trading. Ministers agreed that supermarkets will be closed as usual on Good Friday, but will be able to open on Easter Sunday. Making this decision, we considered input from supermarkets, from unions who represent the workforce of those supermarkets, and communities. It's fair to say that there were a range of views amongst ministers, and I do want to acknowledge the religious significance of Easter Sunday for many New Zealanders. Our decision was driven by the desire to strike a balance between the need for the workforce in our supermarkets to get a well-earned break and for supermarkets to restock, which has been an issue for many, catching up and what was unprecedented demand in our supermarkets across the country. But we also balance that against the need of people to access supermarkets in this unprecedented time.

In the end, the important issue for us was that we wanted to avoid people rushing to the supermarket if there were two days of closure, which would defeat the work everyone is doing to try and reduce people's contact with one another. Given supermarkets often closed on Easter Sunday, it is important that employees know they still have the right to refuse to work that day. I'm sure that employees will like to act fully with these requests and I have been told that the supermarkets have already advised us that employees will be able to volunteer to work on that day rather than being rostered on. I encourage everyone though at this time to consider the strain on supermarkets at present and to only shop for what you need as usual while ensuring of course you keep that physical distancing while you shop.

And if I could make one more request, please be kind to the people who work there. They are doing an incredible service to us at present and they deserve nothing but our respect at this time.

I was asked yesterday about the status of media as an essential service and this was also discussed by COVID ministers today. As you can see, we have treated media as an essential service, but several media publications have expressed concern over which forms of media production and distribution meet the criteria of essential services. While the help of the New Zealand public in stopping the spread of COVID-19 is our top priority, New Zealanders must also have ongoing access to independent media voices for news and current affairs, as well as for sharing public health messages. With that in mind, ministers have agreed to expand the essential business guidance for media to include targeted production of printed newspapers for communities that are hard to reach. It is important to note that our priority remains to stop the movement of people unnecessarily. It is a decision that a very limited number of complications which can demonstrate their filling unmet need and can also show they have appropriate health and safety measures in place to minimize the transmission of COVID-19 during production and delivery will be approved as essential. This means an expectation that delivery will be, for instance, for existing news customs like New Zealand Post at supermarkets or at local dairies. Now, keeping in mind this decision really relates to some of those smaller rural isolated community newspapers, for example other printed periodical non daily publications including magazines, will continue to remain non-essential under the news and media designation, although I do note that many of them have an online offering. There have been accusations that in the restrictions on publications breaches the rights of freedom of speech, that is of course not our view, nor is it our objective. Now more than ever it's important that people have as much information and access to news as is possible, but it's also about reducing

the risk of exposure to COVID-19. Where people can provide the community media content online, we asked them to focus on that mode of publication during this heightened alert, but we accept that there are remote communities and for instance non English language communities who may not be accessing information through other means. I do acknowledge that the media will be significantly affected by the financial impact of COVID-19 as well and we continue to work with all businesses to help cushion the blow and to predict the jobs of New Zealanders.

Today you will have heard from the Director General that the distribution of PPE continues. This morning I was advised that more than 7,000,000 face masks have been dispatched to the North and South Island with the intent that these will go to our frontline community health workers, our midwives support workers, both the disability and aged care, our family planning workers and so on. This, I know, will come as a welcome update and as part of the ongoing distribution of support to those on the frontline.

And finally, I want to finish with a word on our cases for today. We now have a total of 647 confirmed and probable cases, the number of confirmed cases overnight was 58 and that was after 1391 tests. In total, to answer a question asked yesterday, in total, 21,384 tests have been conducted and we have currently the capacity to process roughly 3 and a half thousand tests per day. I had a discussion with our Director General of Health today, as I do every day when we receive our test results. We both agree, not only is it too soon to draw conclusions on New Zealand's position as we tackle this global pandemic, we also don't yet believe we have enough testing to tell us what we need to know. The more we test, the more it tells us how far our community transmission is, and it tells us where it is. Today the technical advisory group met. Now this is the group that has been helping to set the criteria for the Ministry of Health on who is tested. Today, that group have recommended broadening the case definition for testing. This will widen testing to include people with COVID-19 symptoms, but not necessarily a history of treble or exposure to another case to be tested. This case definition will be sent out to healthline, general practice and to the community clinics we testing is taking place now. While it may take a few days for these changes to have an effect, I do expect the number of people tested in New Zealand to grow and it needs to grow. So that should bring everyone up to speed with the latest information, but before I take your questions, I want to share one last thing. I've shared, received a lot of correspondence from the relatives of pharmacists reminding me and all of us are the frontline Rowley family members are playing as we fight to stop the spread of COVID-19 and to keep our communities well. And so we thank our 1072 community pharmacies spread across New Zealand for continuing to provide such an essential service at this time, especially as they've also support our medical nursing workforce and the early flu vaccination campaign for our most vulnerable New Zealand. And also for adapting to alert Level 4 requirements and providing virtual services while working on split shifts to observe physical distancing, from all of us, we say thank you. Now I am happy to take questions.

#### **Speech 14: April 1 (JA14)**

Good afternoon everyone. I want to begin as I have done most days now and start by thanking New Zealanders for the ongoing work to make sure that they stay within their bubbles and stay at home during the period that we are at level 4 and the work that they are doing to break the chain of transmission. As you all have heard this morning, there are 61 new cases today. While on the face of it, that may seem a heartening number relative to some of the other figures that we've had now. Now I want to emphasize again that it is still too early to assess if our measures are successfully slowing transmission. Because COVID-19 takes a while to incubate we could still see increases in our numbers in the days to come off the back of transmission in the community prior to the lockdown that may yet be wearing its head and visible symptoms. If the virus is in the community in this way present, but not yet seen, then the worst thing we could do is be relaxed or too complacent and allow a silent spread. I think we only need to look at some effect clusters of cases that we have in our community to know just how quickly COVID-19 can spread. If we weren't, for instance, currently at level 4, the schooling community of Marist in Auckland, the community of Matamata. If we weren't at level 4, we could see outbreaks that were far far worse down the track. We also don't have a full picture of the extent of community transmission. That is why we have been so focused on increasing testing capacity, which over a period of time we've seen a 91% increase in that testing capacity and are working to continue to build. That is why ultimately testing being so important to obviously our officials in the Ministry of Health

as well, you'll have seen that technical advisory group yesterday, changing the definition for testing to encourage more tests to be undertaken.

We want to know as soon and as accurately as possible how widely spread COVID is in the community so we can be confident we have it back under control. And that we can keep successfully stamping out cases as they arrive. So I'll repeat as I always do. Stay at home. Only go out if you need to. When you do stay local, keep 2 meters apart from others. Stick only to your bubble and act like you have the virus. I continue to be very aware that this is a challenge unlike any other we have faced. But rest assured, if we continue as we are continuing applying the rules, then that gives us the best hope of being able to move into different alert levels. Work carried on in the Beehive today with the Cabinet Business Committee meeting, virtually of course. Earlier today you may have seen from Ministers Jones, Twiford and Parker announcements on infrastructure industry leaders have been asked to find infrastructure projects that are ready to start as soon as the construction industry gears up again. The aim of this is to help reduce the economic impact of COVID by safeguarding jobs and businesses as much as possible projects from the private and public sector, including. Local government that I shovel ready or likely to be within six months, will be put before ministers and I note that this is additional to the government's \$12 billion New Zealand upgrade program and existing provincial growth fund infrastructure investments. We also announced that advance payments will be made to transport construction industry contractors to retain the workforce and ensure it is ready to quickly gear up to build these projects, which will be vital to New Zealand's COVID-19 economic recovery. To complement all of this work is also underway looking at measures to speed up consents for the development in infrastructure projects during the country from COVID-19 to provide jobs and stimulate our economy. Minister Robertson is here if there are any further questions on any of those announcements today.

I also have some information on the first day of the price watch service we announced yesterday. As of 9:00 AM around 990 emails. That does include some duplicates and unrelated messages, but that is the number that had been received as at 9:00 AM. Most the most common complaint was as previously advertised, the high price of cauliflower, with some emails quoting thirty dollars each, but also prices of hand sanitizer, bread, meat, face masks and garlic. Also featured in complaints. I do want to say to people that we are taking these complaints seriously. In some cases, it will simply be an issue of constrained change in supply, particularly when it comes to produce. But we are investigating complaints that are made because this is a time where we want to know that New Zealanders are being treated fairly, and that's what price watch is all about. The process for dealing with complaints is being worked through, and as I've said, will need to be fact checked and we will involve traders so that they have obviously have a chance to respond to some of what's being raised. Again, though, urge everyone shoppers normal and be kind of a supermarket workers who are there so that you can remain stocked up at home.

Following up on some of the questions from yesterday on the government's recently announced \$56 million support package for Māori communities and \$27 million package for NGOs and community groups. Today I want to give you just a few updates. The funding allocated to final order commissioning agencies has been fully paid out, which has helped the agencies to coordinate 100,000 care packages with over 11,000 delivered to date, aiming for 30,000 by the end of the week. And that's to help members of the community have access to products to ensure that they are able to meet some of the expectations during COVID-19 to keep themselves safe, particularly some of the guidelines being issued by the Ministry of Health. The investment has also helped to facilitate priority access to COVID-19 testing for vulnerable farmers such as Chrome Arthur and help to address immediate needs such as providing food and clothing, access to isolation, accommodation and technology for educational needs. Nicole Cody and the Ministry of Health are continuing to work with commissioning agencies to make sure that they are involved in the wider COVID-19 response. Of the package to support NGO's and community groups nearly half has been allocated, that's roughly 12 million, to support essential family and sexual violence services. That includes one off grounds to the likes of Women's Refuge and other services to provide residential support to ensure women and children can move to safe accommodation or stay safe in their homes with the perpetrator removed, and an immediate \$1,000,000 boost to beef up the capacity for crisis and helpline services. Minister for Social Development Carmel Sepuloni will have more to say on it and in the very near future.

And finally today I want to thank the people who everyone at home is becoming very familiar with as you watch our Daily Press conferences, and that is our sign language interpreters. I know civil defense director Sarah Borrell issued a thank you earlier today and I want to reiterate that and specifically to Ellen, Jean and Melissa who you see quite

frequently though Ellen is not here at the moment. Winda, Rosie and Angela as well. Some of the faces that you see frequently. About 4 to 5000 New Zealanders are deaf and rely on New Zealand Sign Language as their first language. It is one of New Zealand's three official languages. And remember, this singular focus is to make sure as many New Zealanders as possible know what is going on. Not just here in Parliament, but in New Zealand and around the country. And I know there's also much interpretation work going on alongside the huge increase in video conferencing as well. It is an exceptional feat and at a vital time when we need information to reach as many New Zealanders as possible. I know a few of our sign language interpreters have rightly gone viral, and I hope what will also go viral is our gratitude for the incredible role in important work that they do. So thank you. I'm happy to take questions.

### **Speech 15: April 2 (JA15)**

Good afternoon, everyone. Today I can give you an update on the reach of government investment that at this stage aims to ensure people remain connected to their jobs and have an income, so businesses can come through the impacts of COVID-19 and keep going. The wage subsidy has seen \$4.5 billion paid out, helping just over 750,000 New Zealanders, 115,000 of which are self-employed. And to shine a light on the current daily scale, there were 13,300 new applications since yesterday, and they continue to be processed in earnest by industry staff. Today I can also confirm that we've agreed a leave scheme for essential workers. This is for those essential businesses that are experiencing significant loss of business or similar hardship. There are people working in our essential services who are more vulnerable to COVID-19, such as those over 70 or with compromised immunity and workers who have vulnerable people at home. We need to ensure that they have the ability to take leave and are not feeling pressured to come to work if they are vulnerable, sick or otherwise unable to work. This also applies to those on essential service frontline that contract the virus and need to take leave as a result. The leave scheme allows businesses to pay those workers who need to take leave at the same rate as the wage subsidy scheme of 585.80 per week for full time and \$350.00 per week for part time workers. Usual conditions apply, such as an employer paying the usual income if it's less than the relevant subsidy, or if it's more the employer aiming to pay at least 80% of the workers usual income. The scheme will be open and available from next Monday. Minister Robertson is here to answer any questions on scheme, but you will recall as many of you have asked questions about this issue, but this is to ensure that any essential frontline workers who are vulnerable and are now supported to be at home and that their employers we continue to have that expectation that they'll be able to remain at home.

Today I can also share decisions made by the COVID committee. The Deputy Prime Minister has been leading work on the repatriation of foreign nationals. As he has said this afternoon when we moved into lockdown a week ago we rightly prioritized public health and limited the movement of people so as to restrict the spread of COVID-19. But it is clear that many foreign nationals travelling here do not have the resources or capability to adequately self-isolate and wish to return home. The week that we've had and this first week of lockdown has given us the space and capacity to draw up a plan to enable a seamless as possible the movement of foreign nationals in order for them to exit New Zealand. Under the managed exit plan foreign nationals returning home will be considered to be an engaging and essential treble and therefore able to travel domestically, whether by air or land, when they have a confirmed or scheduled international flight out of New Zealand, with some specific requirements there that sit alongside that, that's all available on the COVID-19 website, but in particular someone who's travelling on a domestic flight must have a ticketed international flight within a 24 hour window, so that we can be assured they are travelling to get to an International Airport in order to leave New Zealand. Foreign governments will be allowed to organize charter flights to repatriate these citizens, but only if they can satisfy New Zealand health requirements. I expected as a result of these changes and as part of our now managed exit plan, that we will see people are beginning to move fairly shortly, and for those who are relying on commercial options which do still exist and there continues to be a Qatar flight going daily, I believe, and more so than that soon out of Doha, those commercial options are there and are available and we have not put a time limit on people's ability to engage in essential travel for domestic links.

So I want to assure foreign nationals that they will have the time to make a plan and make a safe plan for themselves to utilize those commercial options. Today, a New Zealand government WhatsApp channel for COVID-19 has kicked off. The current functions include latest updates and news, latest case information, symptoms, financial support

available and mental health advisers. It's been led by the Health minister David Clarke and was developed with health and private sector including Rob Pfiere and Sam Morgan. For those interested rather than being an app, it utilizes WhatsApp given that so many New Zealanders already have this function on their phone. So once you have WhatsApp on your phone, if you simply open your browser, type in COVID-19.GVT.NZ/ what's that will give you the option of sending yourself a link that will then open in your existing WhatsApp and you'll have the latest COVID-19 information right there directly on your phone and you'll see that includes the latest case information for today and will do so on a rolling basis. You will see that once we have people using their function and that device on their device, sorry that there will then build an additional functionality and in the future may be able to help us as we continue our ongoing fight against COVID-19.

Finally today, I want to extend a thank you to those whose job it is to keep our communities safe, our police workforce of nearly 14,000, more than 10,000 of which are police officers, on alert 4 for their approaches, educate, warn, and enforce. But what we've seen most is assistance. I've heard that in Rotorua on Monday, for example, a local gentleman who is homeless who usually rebuffs police help, accepted fresh food, clothing and isolation accommodation. He was supported then to set up a doctor's check-up as he hadn't been in a long time, all with the help of local police in Northland. This week a police shift staff member advised an elderly man in a supermarket that he should be at home as he was vulnerable to COVID-19. The man had no one to shop for him, so the staff member asked for his address, did the shop and dropped it to his front door. We know too that police as they keep us safe are facing challenges themselves as they do everyday, but they continue to go above and beyond and for that I want to say thank you to all of them.

Finally, I want to acknowledge police Commissioner Mike Bush, who finishes up at midnight tonight, handing the reins over to Andy, Andrew Kosta. Michael stayed on in the all of government COVID-19 response group and will be working closely with our new Police Commissioner. Mike Bush has been an exceptional police officer and civil servant and his commissioner has led the frontline response to some enormous and extraordinary challenges. He leaves the role with a police force that continues to change and adapt and meets the needs of it. The people it serves. So now it's not really farewell for Mike given he will continue to be part of the operational response to COVID-19, but in his role as police commissioner for now he signs off and we say thank you. Happy to take questions and obviously Minister Robertson is here also.

### **Speech 16: April 5 (JA16)**

Good afternoon, everyone. We are in day 11 of our COVID-19 alert level 4 in lockdown. As in the past I've been sharing the platform with Director-General of Health, Dr Ashley Bloomfield. I will ask him to kick off our briefing today. And after that, I'll make some comments. Then we will move to questions. Dr. Bloomfield.

[...] Thank you, Dr. Bloomfield. As you will have heard from the Director-General, we now have 1,039 cases in New Zealand with the 89 cases that have been reported today. While I don't want to draw too many conclusions at this stage, you will see that our cases have, in the last few days, been relatively steady. We have not seen the exponential growth that others have that leads to an overwhelmed health system. That is a good thing. Now what we need to do is see those numbers start to come down. I'm aware now that every time we see now cases it may be hard to see success, but we can be sure that what we have done as a country since the very beginning of COVID-19 is making a difference.

Economist Rodney Jones was interviewed this morning and talked about some of the modelling has been done using the expertise of his team including a biostatistician and using key learnings and expertise from the outbreak of SARS. This is modelling I have seen over the last few weeks and monitored closely especially given at several points it has been accurate in predicting New Zealand case numbers. On the eve of lockdown his model predicted we had the potential to face as many as 4,000 cases this weekend. We're instead at just over 1,000. Those 3,000 fewer cases shows the difference that cumulative action can make. 3,000 fewer people sick with COVID-19, 3,000 fewer people passing the virus down to others and then to others, and then to others. We can and we must continue to break the chain of transmission. As Rodney said, we need to get to half-time and perhaps a bit beyond that to see the full gains of the lockdown. But we have made a good start and the decisions we've made to date have made a difference.

I've also seen reporting and statistics from Google that gives us some insight into our reduction and movement as a nation that reflects impressively high levels of compliance by New Zealanders with the requirements of being at level 4 and reducing contacts with others. There's been an overall reduction in movement in places of retail and recreation of 91%. Even visits to the supermarket and pharmacy, which remain essential services and open, have dropped by half. Going to parks is down by nearly 80%. And while we are doing well at alert level 4, we also went earlier, before that point, in order to ensure the virus wouldn't have a stranglehold here. And that was the case for many of our measures. New analysis by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade shows we closed our borders 25 days after our first case. Germany took 49 days, Spain 52, Australia 55, Singapore 61. Our first economic package was in place 18 days after the first case. Most countries took more than 40 days. Ours was 6% of GDP - bigger at the time than the UK, France, Germany, Italy, Spain, China, Korea and Japan, and on par with Canada. Our case rate and death toll is well below other comparable countries. Yes, we had the benefit of time because our distance and because our early border and mass gathering measures also have made a difference there. But we had the benefit of a window of opportunity where the benefit of witnessing a terrible trajectory overseas. You can see now just how small that window of opportunity is to try and stop community transmission. Going hard and going early appears though to be paying off for us.

The lockdown is the best way to stop the virus and it is also the best thing for our economy. By making the pain as short as possible. So I say to New Zealanders be proud of your efforts that you have all made, the sacrifices that you have made, it is making a difference. Now is the time though to remain focused, to not let up, and to keep our eyes on the mission that we all jointly share. This is why we have strengthened efforts to go after those who aren't sharing that mission and who appear to be breaking the rules. As Dr. Bloomfield and the police announced yesterday, a new Health Act notice has been issued to firm up the guidance around the rules in place during alert level 4 and ensure the success of the lockdown and help move the country out of it as soon as possible. And the police are enforcing these guidelines. Over Friday and Saturday, police completed 795 prevention patrols in communities across the country and undertook 990 reassurance checks at essential services such as supermarkets, petrol stations and pharmacies. While compliance has been generally strong, there are still some who I would charitably describe as "idiots". A 38-year-old Christchurch man arrested last night being seen on a video coughing on people in a supermarket I include in that description. He has been charged with endangering life by criminal nuisance and obstruction of an officer of health and will be appearing in court tomorrow.

Before I conclude, I want to dwell briefly on some of the discussion I have seen emerge over the past few days over what kind of public health response is best for the economy. I've said it many times before and I'll say it again - no matter what it is you favor, the solution is the same. Fight the virus.

A strategy that sacrifices people in favor of supposedly a better economic outcome is a false dichotomy and has been shown to produce the worst of both worlds - loss of life and prolonged economic pain. We need only look to history here as a guide. There is research available that looks at, for instance, the 1918 Spanish Flu. Times may have changed but the lesson overall is that those who worked zealously to stem the spread did better economically in the aftermath. That is not to say there is no currently paying. And for those who have lost jobs, for businesses making difficult decisions, for those essential services providing frontline support networks we all rely on. I know there is real and genuine struggle in New Zealand right now and I don't carry that lightly. That is why the \$5 billion paid out for wage subsidies in a couple of weeks has been so important to cushion the blow of going hard and going early as we have in New Zealand. But, nevertheless, we are likely to feel the long-term effects from a global downturn. As the Minister for Finance said on Friday, our message to business is to hold on to your people, give them the wage subsidy if you need to. And have a plan for coming out the other side. In particular, plan how your business will operate in different levels of the alert framework.

The Government's focus this week remains doing all we can to stop the spread of the virus so we can move out of lockdown as soon as possible. Our efforts remain focused on good levels of testing across all regions and getting a better picture on community transmission, continuing to scale-up our contact tracing efforts, as the Director-General has outlined, and ensuring New Zealanders' businesses are receiving the financial support they need. I also expect this week to receive further advice from the Ministry of Health and my Chief Science advisor and others on the evidence-base needed to have confidence we do have the virus under control and therefore can move with certainty

out of level 4, and the measures that will need to be in place at level 3 to ensure we're preventing any risk of further outbreaks.

Finally, a public service announcement. Daylight Savings ended overnight. This is the time where people are usually asked to keep smoke alarms, and as we're all at home a bit more than usual, I'd say this is the year not to let that one slide. Alright now, I'm happy to take any questions.

### **Speech 17: April 6 (JA17)**

[...] With their workforce intact. A total of 876,000 people so far have shared in \$5.3 billion, which has been paid out. This is an incredible number when it comes to money we've got out the door in just a few weeks, particularly when you consider that in a number of other countries their wage subsidy schemes haven't yet started paying out, and nor are they scheduled to in many cases for some weeks to come. One of our strong principles in deciding on the wage subsidy scheme was that cash flow was going to be critical for businesses and for their employees, which is why we moved to a mechanism that would enable that as quickly as possible. MSD is still working hard through applications. In fact, I had a conversation with the chief executive over the weekend. They had hundreds of their workers and working long hours processing applications to support those many employees and those many businesses.

Treasury estimates that between 8 billion and 12 billion will eventually be paid out under the scheme, all in support of workers. This amount of investment requires a level of transparency, and when Minister Robertson introduced the scheme, he said the Republic Register will follow and that searchable database will be available shortly and that suitable database will enable anyone, any member of the public, but particularly employees to search the company name and see whether or not their workplace has been a recipient of the wage subsidy.

I want to reflect on an issue that has been front of mind for us during this period of lockdown, and that's the issue of mental health. I know there are some people who are feeling distressed, anxious or worried at this time, and that is completely understandable. In a short interview that I did with psychologists Nigel Letter last week he made the point that none, none of us, no Kiwi in the country right now, would be alone in feeling like that and that no one should be too hard on themselves at this particular point in time. That's why we will tomorrow release campaigns and resources with tips designed to help Kiwis cope with the stresses created by COVID-19 not just through lockdown, but beyond that too. These are guided by best practice, health promotion and focuses on providing people with the tools they need to be able to manage their worries, look after their mental health and connect with loved ones despite operating from and their own bubbles at this time.

I want to touch quickly on the issue of Level 4 and questions on the length of time that we'll be here, which understandably I've heard from both you and the media and members of the public. As I've said a few times now, we have a broad set of indicators that we'll be looking to to assist our movement between alert levels, but we're also looking at more detail around some of those indicators, but let me be really clear. I don't want New Zealand to be at level 4 a minute longer than needed. But equally there is no plan to move from Level 4 early. I just wanted to be nice and clear on that as it was a question that was raised with me this morning. All actions we have taken to date are about minimizing the amount of time we are at level 4 in order to stamp out the virus and our actions for the remainder of the period and level four will be about doubling down to ensure the gains made in the first half aren't squandered in the second.

We are determined to make sure that we stamp our COVID-19. That means broader testing and in particular surveillance testing, more and faster contact tracing, and strong enforcement of the lockdown rules, and of course, border controls. Now is not the time to ease up, but rather the time for all of us to focus even harder on the mission that we have. With that in mind, I want to repeat the rationale for why we were at alert level 4 for four weeks. First, the virus can take up to 14 days to show signs. So cases we are seeing coming through now can be people who had the virus prior to the lockdown but were asymptomatic. Those people may have passed the virus on to close contacts prior to the lockdown, so we can expect to see these close contacts coming through now and in the next week as well. And of course, these people may have passed it on to others in their bubble or their essential workplace as

well. So the lockdown ought to have stopped wider transmission, but we can expect to continue to see cases and contacts of those cases still coming through. Because of this time lag and the virus rearing its head four weeks is the minimum time needed to ensure the chain of transmission from these cases is stopped and it's the reason we're very deliberate and really clear with New Zealanders that it would be 4 weeks when we went into alert level 4 just to give everyone that level of certainty. We also need to better understand the cases of Community transmission and have certainty there isn't wider presence in the Community than we are aware of. This is especially true in areas with low case numbers. Absence of evidence is not evidence of absence. We need to be absolutely sure we're not missing silent outbreaks and that is where surveillance testing is so important. You've heard the director general talk about that and myself, and that is something the Ministry of Health is working on as we speak.

We'll be using then the next two and a half weeks to significantly better data on the risk of unseen transmission in our Community to help form our decision making about level 4 and the other levels. But I repeat, there is no desire to be in lockdown for any longer than we need to be, and we need to do that of course, for enough time to ensure we have the information needed both nationally and regionally to move out of level 4 with confidence that we have community spread under control and that the sacrifices made by New Zealanders will have paid off.

A quick word on stranded New Zealanders. To date, INFET has facilitated the return of 334 New Zealanders in addition to those who have returned on commercial flights. As you will have seen from the statement made by the Minister of Foreign Affairs, the New Zealand Government has made arrangements to charter a flight for New Zealanders stranded in Peru to depart the country following agreement with the Chilean government to allow the necessary transit that we needed to give them home. I'm also pleased to report that we were able to extract 11 New Zealanders from strict and extended lockdown conditions in the Tyrol region in Austria along with around 20 Australians. The group exited the quarantine cordon on a chartered bus and have now boarded a flight bound for Auckland via Doha. Our diplomats in Vienna worked closely with the Australian partners and we're really grateful for their partnership and for Australia's assistance here too. Together we collaborated with our Austrian counterparts and with regional police and Qatar Airways to help New Zealanders home in a very trying and complex situation. We are aware of three more Kiwis who want to return to New Zealand from that same region and our officials will continue to work to help them with that exit. These are really complex consular operations requiring close collaboration with multiple governments and authorities, as you can imagine with different countries and different forms of lockdown at present.

Finally, some very good news from the wider health sector that I wanted to share today. The last patients involved in the facade White Island tragedy have now been discharged from the National Burn Centre in Auckland. The volcanic eruption on December 9 in which 21 people lost their lives set in motion a massive national and international response in which the National Burns Service, which is hosted at Middlemore, was really key. Now, whilst there are still those who were affected by facade White Island eruption still in other parts of our health system I do wanna play tribute to those at Middlemore who played such a huge role in the critical care of so many. I visited Middlemore just before Christmas and met with some of the staff and met with some of the family and they do incredible work. Very very difficult work and you can only imagine the circumstances under which they were working after their tragedy. I want to thank all of the health sector who were involved across the country in their response because we've now reached a really important milestone for them and despite the situation we find ourselves in now I didn't wanna leave that milestone pass without acknowledging them. I'm open to questions now.

### **Speech 18: April 7 (JA18)**

Good afternoon, everyone, and welcome to day 13 of our COVID alert level 4 lockdown and update. We'll start with the update today from the Director-General of Health, and then I will come back for some opening remarks. You'll note that we have moved to a combined press conference; that's simply as we transition from, really, the early stages of alert level 4, and as we see some of those operational updates lessen a little bit, we will still be making sure that we have different operational leads who are available – for instance, the Commissioner of Police and so on – just to pick up any questions across those areas. In recognition, though, of a combined press conference, I will make sure that we linger longer in order to pick up any questions that you might have. But Director-General, we'll start with you.



[...] Thank you, Ashley. To begin with today, I wish to speak about the actions of the Minister of Health. As you will have heard, last night David Clark advised me that he drove his family to the beach for a walk in the early stages of the lockdown. He also offered me his resignation. I want to share with you what I shared with him: under normal circumstances, I would sack the Minister. What he did was wrong and there are no excuses. But my priority above all else is our collective fight against COVID-19. That requires leadership amongst our DHBs. It requires a good understanding of workforce issues. It requires an intimate knowledge of the strengths and weaknesses of our health system, which we have been working so hard to rebuild. And, of course, it requires knowledge of the complex nature of this global pandemic and what it means here in New Zealand.

Simply put, I determined that we cannot afford massive disruption in the health sector or to our response, because David Clark continues to represent what we require, as our health Minister, to take on COVID-19. For that reason and that reason alone, Dr. Clark will maintain his role, but he broke the rules and he does need to pay a price. So, while he maintains his health portfolio, I have stripped him of his role as associate finance Minister and demoted him to the bottom of our Cabinet rankings. His associate finance Minister delegations revert to the Minister of Finance, with the exception of where they relate to Budget oversight of Minister Robertson's other portfolios – they will go to Minister Parker. These changes are effective immediately. David Clark is under no illusions that I expect better and so does New Zealand.

On to COVID-19-related matters, I can also report that we do, as the Director-General of Health says, continue to ramp up our testing capacity. We are testing more and more people, and the growth in the number of new cases remains relatively consistent. While I still urge caution, this does suggest that what we are doing as a nation is working. This was echoed earlier today on Nine to Noon by John McDermott, who leads the team of data scientists that I referenced on Sunday. He said over the next day or so we could continue to see the impacts of alert level 4. He says, 'When numbers start to fall, that is the first indication your interventions are working.' John explains we need to go through three phases: you start with outbreak; then, secondly, you want linear, which we have seen over the past few days; and thirdly is the phase where you see cases start to fall. He is cautiously optimistic that what we're doing with the lockdown is making a difference, but as with any data analysis, there are always possibilities of setbacks. But, for the moment, we do appear at this early stage to be on track – another reason, if one was needed, of the need to stay at home. Now is not the time to change any of our behaviors.

Now, that doesn't make the physical isolation any easier; so I also note today that we have announced a range of support being rolled out to help look after people, look after their mental health as we fight COVID-19. Details of our targeted Pacific communities health response to the virus have also been released. I can also share that, as of last night, the Government's wage subsidy scheme has provided support to preserve the jobs of over one million New Zealanders. The latest numbers show that over 435,000 applications have been made, almost 10,000 yesterday alone, and that has seen over \$6.6 billion paid out to help retain 1,073,120 workers.

Finally, the Foreign Minister has just announced that New Zealand will enter into transit arrangements with a range of countries to make it easier for each other's citizens to get home. As you know, a major barrier to New Zealanders getting back here at the moment is the transit restrictions imposed by many other countries, and we in turn are also receiving an increasing number of requests from foreign Governments to allow their nationals to transit through Auckland. I note that, while this is a welcome development, regardless of the countries involved, we will maintain strict criteria in determining the basis on which people can transit through New Zealand, in order to protect public health and meet our level 4 requirements. That includes that any transiting passengers absolutely remain airside.

Lastly, I do want to acknowledge the news this morning that Prime Minister Boris Johnson is currently in intensive care. Upon learning the Prime Minister had tested positive for COVID-19 some days ago now, I sent a message to him to pass on New Zealand's best wishes. He replied to that message and said that his thoughts were also 'with all our friends in New Zealand.' This, more than ever, is a time when every nation is connected, and I know we'll want everyone in the UK, especially the Prime Minister, to know that we are thinking of them. Now I am happy to take your questions.

## Speech 19: April 8 (JA19)

Good afternoon. Welcome to day 14 of our COVID-19 alert level 4 briefing. Today, we have a full range of people available to you. After the Director-General and I have departed, the Minister of Education will come in, while, of course, maintaining social distancing, to talk you through our distance learning package, which I'll speak to very, very briefly as well. This afternoon, you'll also have a chance to hear from the Commissioner of Police and Sarah Stuart-Black, the director of the National Emergency Management Agency. But for now, I'll ask the Director-General to give us an update.

[...] Thank you, Director-General. As Dr. Bloomfield has highlighted, today we have the highest number of tests reported in any one day and the lowest number of new cases in two weeks. We may yet see bumps along the way, but, as I said yesterday, I remain cautiously optimistic that we are starting to turn a corner. It's all the more reason to stay the course of our self-isolation as a nation.

As I said yesterday, we have also surpassed 1 million New Zealanders being supported by our wage subsidy scheme. One of the key principles of the wage subsidy scheme is that we keep people connected to work. There's another sector that's doing this alongside us, and that is our primary sector.

You will have seen earlier today that the Minister of Agriculture highlighted one of our star exporters—horticulture—that is keeping New Zealanders both fed and in jobs at this really important time. Overseas workers traditionally fill many roles in our fruit and veggie growing sector, but, as you can imagine, the action that we've taken as a government at the border has meant fewer overseas workers have been available. And now, amid our kiwifruit harvest, we're seeing reports that those workforces now have over 90 percent New Zealand staff, compared to 50 percent last season. Last week alone more than 100 staff were placed into roles in the Bay of Plenty, Auckland, and Nelson. The pipfruit industry, made up of apples and pears, has seen around 200 workers from other industries placed into jobs across the country. So today I want to give my thanks to our food producers in every part of that workforce for continuing to look after us and for the actions in that industry to make sure that people remain in employment.

I know there are some workers on our orchards at the moment from the Pacific working hard here while Cyclone Harold crosses their homelands, particularly Vanuatu and Fiji. And I can understand the worry that you will have for your families. A quick update on that front: this morning, a P-3 Defense Force aircraft left New Zealand to provide much needed surveillance of damage. I expect that that will actually be happening as we speak. We also have the C-130 at the ready to deploy with essential supplies. In the meantime, our thoughts are with, particularly, the nation of Vanuatu as they come to grips with the impact of that cyclone—and understand that we, of course, are still building a picture of just the scale of that cyclone as we speak.

Today I also have an update on how our aviation relief package is supporting our industries as well and keeping our isolated communities connected. You'll recall that we set aside \$600 million in our COVID relief package to support this key part of our transport infrastructure. As you can imagine, air freight connectivity is really critical for our remote communities. They also help ensure we receive urgent supply of medicines, PPE, and critical equipment. We now have eight initial support agreements with airlines and a ground handling company around the country, totaling up to 4.7 million. And, of course, we need to make sure our regions are easily able to access critical, time-sensitive freight—food, medical supplies, blood donations.

So the Chatham Islands now have their air link secured, and Air Chathams is making three trips a week, making sure residents get what they need. This package is also providing support to the likes of Air Napier and Barrier Air. In addition, most of our high-value goods were carried overseas in passenger aircraft, and, of course, many of those are no longer flying and so we have stepped in.

Supported by our relief package, Air New Zealand has now made 17 flights since Monday last week to Shanghai, Hong Kong, Los Angeles, San Francisco, and Sydney. At least 18 more flights are planned over the next 10 days. They are taking food overseas and returning with cargo, which includes PPE, hand sanitizer, thermal imaging equipment, test kits, and flu vaccinations. We know we need to do more, though. This is not just a short-term challenge, so we've committed \$330 million to supporting international air freight over the next six months. We've received 16 proposals

from airlines and carriers all over the world to help critical air freight continue, and we're evaluating those proposals as we speak, and we'll have further announcements later this month. A message though to any of those critical exporters or importers needing capacity on these flights: contact [myfreight@nzt.govt.nz](mailto:myfreight@nzt.govt.nz).

Finally, school's back next week, with the beginning of term 2, but it will look a little different to begin with during COVID-19 alert level 4. I know I've personally been thinking a lot about parents at home with their children at the moment. I've seen so many of the ways that you've entertained them during this time, but we have a role to support you. Directly after this press conference, the Minister of Education will detail an extensive distant learning package to help every learner across New Zealand—be it providing hand-held devices, hard packs of materials, dedicated television channels, or online resources. Households will have access to at least one of these alternatives, so parents are supported to keep their children learning at home.

And, finally, you will have heard clear messages from the police around the Easter break of what to expect. The message here is really simple: alert level 4 lockdown remains in place and there is absolutely no change to the rules. That means churches and other places of worship will remain closed over Easter weekend, and I know that will be an enormous disappointment to many New Zealanders of faith, but I ask religious leaders to ensure there are not congregations coming together. Many places of worship are catering for communities using Zoom, YouTube, Facebook, and even the Houseparty app, I understand. Please go to your faith's website, get more details of how you can connect and worship over Easter, but please do stay at home and save lives and enjoy your staycation. We're happy to take questions.

### **Speech 20: April 9 (JA20)**

Good afternoon, everyone. Welcome to day 15. I'm going to start by handing over to Dr. Bloomfield to give us an update on our latest case numbers. Then we'll come back to me and I'll be giving a slightly longer scene-setter, given the milestone that we've reached recently with lockdown at alert level 4. So Dr. Bloomfield, I'll hand over to you.

[...] Thank you, Ashley. Today is day 15 of alert level 4 lockdown. And at this rough halfway mark, I have no hesitation saying that what New Zealanders have done over the last two weeks is huge. In the face of the greatest threat to human health that we have faced in over a century, Kiwis have quietly and collectively implemented a nationwide wall of defense. You are breaking the chain of transmission, and you did it for each other.

As a government, we have had pandemic notices. We've had powers that come with being in a national emergency, but you held the greatest power of all. You made the decision that, together, we could protect one another, and you have. You have saved lives. Modelling provided to my office by economist Rodney Jones on the eve of the lockdown suggested New Zealand was on a similar trajectory to potentially Italy or even Spain, and that our 205 cases on 25 March could have grown to over 10,000 by now without the actions we have taken together.

And new modelling, due to be released later this afternoon by Te Pūnaha Matatini, suggests that the current controls at alert level 4 have already had a significant impact on new case numbers, and we are on track to meet their most optimistic scenario. Instead of the horrific scenes we've seen abroad, we are at 1,239 cases, and the total number of cases has fallen for the last four days, with, as Dr Bloomfield said, just 29 cases today, the lowest daily number of cases since 23 March before the lockdown began. We are turning a corner, and your commitment means our plan is working. But to succeed, we need it to keep working. Success does not mean we change the course. Removing the restrictions now would allow the virus to spread rapidly once again, and we would be back to the starting line within two weeks. That's also why we will keep enforcing the rules.

In addition, you will have seen an increase in police enforcement in recent days. I expect that to continue, including roadblocks in some places this Easter weekend. While most are doing the right thing, some are not. We cannot let the selfish actions of a few set us back, and we won't, especially after all that everyone has sacrificed to get us here.

I've read messages from those who have lost loved ones that couldn't come together to grieve for them. I've read stories of brand-new parents whose most joyful time has been made so difficult because of separation; businesses

who are worried for their livelihoods, and for the family that are their employees. I am acutely aware of the pain many New Zealanders are feeling.

Over 1 million of our fellow citizens are now supported by a wage subsidy, many of whom will be experiencing a cut in income. At the end of March, there were already an extra 4,866 Kiwis on a benefit, and last week that number increased by another 10,000. Many businesses are also reporting that they may not be able to reopen at the end of the lockdown. I want to give you all the assurance that I can that the health and wellbeing of you and our communities has always been on our minds as we have made decisions on COVID-19. But so has your livelihoods. We will continue to stand alongside you.

We've made record investments to keep as many businesses as possible afloat, and people in jobs. We're doing what we can to cushion the blow and plan for our recovery. But, as I've said, this is going to be a marathon. Our plan for that marathon is to keep eliminating the virus from New Zealand. We can do that by keeping it out of the country, but also by rapidly stamping out any outbreaks that flare up, and that plan is the very best thing that we can do for the New Zealand economy. The best economic response continues to be a strong health response. And that's why I'm announcing the next stage of initiatives to scale up our health response, to put us in the best possible position to exit level 4 and prepare for level 3.

No matter what level we are at in the future, there are three areas where we need to become watertight. Firstly, our borders must be tightly managed. That's why, from midnight tonight, every New Zealander boarding a flight to return home will be required to undergo quarantine, or what we have called 'managed isolation' in an approved facility for a minimum of 14 days. I am also signaling that the requirement for 14 days of quarantine or managed self-isolation in a government-approved facility will be a prerequisite for anyone entering the country in order to keep the virus out.

As an island nation, we have a distinct advantage in our ability to eliminate the virus, but our borders are also our biggest risk. As a government, we have gone harder earlier, with broader measures compared to other countries. But even one person slipping through the cracks and bringing the virus in can see an explosion in cases, as we have observed with some of our biggest clusters. The quarantining of returning New Zealanders will be a significant undertaking. For context, nearly 40,000 New Zealanders have returned home since 20 March, when we closed the border to foreign nationals. That is more than all of the hotel rooms across the country that we could have properly housed people in. There has always been urgency around this matter, but simply put, we could not have done it from the beginning, but we can and are doing it now. A network of up to 18 hotels will be used to implement this approach, of which, one to two will be specifically set aside for those under strict quarantine conditions – and just as a reminder, those are for those travelers who are symptomatic or are being tested for COVID-19.

The second aspect of our ongoing COVID response is significantly scaled-up and faster contact tracing, and greater use of technology. The more we move to improve the speed and effectiveness of our contact tracing, the better placed we will be in breaking the chain of transmission. The Ministry of Health is already working on a locally developed app that will assist with contact tracing. I should caution that it is in the early stages. It will have basic functionality, but even that will be important, as it will help update our national health database with users' contact details. Then they will look to add functions.

We are investigating the Singaporean Government's Bluetooth-based app TraceTogether, that can record interactions between a phone and any other phones nearby that have the app installed. I should caution though that it will often pick up phones at quite a distance, so it's not perfect technology. The data is stored on the phone, and if the user tests positive, they then release the data to the Government for contact tracing. Close contacts can then be automatically notified of their need to self-isolate and be tested. Singapore are planning to open source their technology in the next few weeks. We have made initial contact with the Singaporean Government and registered our interest, and I have a phone call with Prime Minister Lee of Singapore this evening where I'll be discussing this technology further.

I do again think it's important to note that these kinds of apps are useful, but they don't solve everything. What's most important is that you have good people and enough people working on contact tracing as quickly as possible. We do, and we continue to improve and work to improve every day, as Dr. Bloomfield has set out.

And finally, this ongoing plan must be underpinned by testing. We already have incredibly high rates of testing compared to others, but we want to be even better. We will be maintaining high levels of testing and supplementing it with additional testing to ensure we have greater levels of certainty around the decline in the virus' spread. With these three pillars: border controls, rigorous testing and contact tracing, and making sure, of course, that we use all the technology available, we have what we need to win this marathon. But I know in a race it's important to have signposts to know where we are and exactly what we need to do when we get there so we can all have a plan.

Let me set out some of the timelines then for some key decisions that will affect everyone. Level 4 has come with some heavy restrictions. It has required difficult decisions around services and businesses that can and cannot operate. We need to give similar detailed guidance on what life at level 3 looks like, and we will do that next week.

That will give us a window to iron out questions and issues and make sure we're as prepared as we can be when it comes time to eventually move. It is my intention that on the 20<sup>th</sup> of April 2 days before the lockdown is due to finish, Cabinet will make a decision on our next steps. That's because we need to use the most up-to-date data that we have to make that decision. That means if we are ready to move to alert level 3, if we are ready to move to alert level 3, business will have 2 days to implement arrangements. But let me say again, we will not be moving out of level 4 early. If we move too early, we will go backwards.

In the meantime, I ask every business to use the time you have to prepare for what every alert level means for you. Treat COVID-19 like a health and safety issue. Ask whether it's possible for your business to operate with social distancing. Can you build in contact-tracing tools or mechanisms to keep track of your supply chain and customers? Help us get ready as a nation for the marathon that we must run together.

I do know that we can do this, and I know that because we are already. So as we head into Easter, I say thank you to you and your bubble. You have stayed calm. You've been strong. You've saved lives, and now we just need to keep going. Happy to take questions.

### **Speech 21: April 13 (JA21)**

Today is day number 10 of alert level 4 lockdown, and I'll start, as I usually do, by handing over to the Director-General of Health to give us an update on today's cases. Dr. Bloomfield.

[...] Thank you, Dr Bloomfield. I hope, despite the obvious restrictions, that you have still been able to observe and acknowledge Easter in a way that is meaningful to all of you, be it the online church congregations, backyard Easter egg hunts, or simply coming together for a special meal either within your bubble or with others virtually. From what I've seen, New Zealanders have been pretty creative in the way they have marked Easter, in spite of the circumstances.

But as you have just heard from the director-general, we have been reminded yet again these past few days why we are doing what we are doing, as we share news of another death in New Zealand as a result of COVID-19. It is a timely reminder that our battle with this virus is far from over. While overall case numbers have continued to fall, even one case can become many – our clusters have shown that. The simple act of coming together for a social occasion, something that previously would've been considered normal, can lead to more than 80 cases, as we have seen. And even more deadly is if the virus reaches people in vulnerable communities like rest homes and aged care facilities, where three of our five deaths have occurred.

We've been lucky to date that the virus is not evident in some of our communities where people often live in close quarters and in larger numbers, but that too poses a risk if lockdown is lifted before we have firm evidence the virus is under control and that there isn't silent community transmission. Our number of cases may be small, but that doesn't mean we have yet been successful in hunting this virus down. One positive can be indicative of other cases in the community, and that is why we must keep going, and that's something I wanted to remind everyone of today.

As I've said before, we are definitely not in a position to move out of level 4 early, and nor can we afford to change anything that we are doing while we are here. I say, then, to those who broke the rules this weekend: it could take

one case amongst you to have an outbreak that could lead to dozens of infections and, possibly, death. New Zealand does not take this challenge lightly, and nor should you.

Secondly, while we all want to lift the restrictions as soon as we are in the position to do so, that decision will not be taken until 20 April. We need to use the most up-to-date live data that we have, and we will.

Thirdly, if and when we do move, level 3 will have significant restrictions also. We should consider it a waiting room, a place we move to that allows a bit more activity to occur, but not so much that we risk losing all the gains that we have made. This is the place we go while we check that we have genuinely got things under control and that we are on track to stamp out the virus. That then allows us to make decisions around whether we are ready to move to level 2. As I've said recently, while our focus this week remains on shutting down the pathways for the virus to spread, through testing and rigorous contact tracing, we will also this week be setting out details for each of the alert levels.

So let me run through what this week looks like – especially what you can expect in that regard. Tomorrow, the Treasury will release a series of economic scenarios of the potential impact of COVID-19 on unemployment, GDP, and the ability for the economy to recover. In addition, the Treasury's weekly economic update will now be expanded to include additional indicators of economic activity in order for there to be regular and up-to-date data on what is happening in the economy. On Wednesday, the finance minister will deliver an online speech to BusinessNZ, setting out the next steps in our plan to cushion the impact of lockdown, including further measures to assist businesses. He will also set out our revised approach to Budget 2020. On Thursday, I will release further details on what level 3 and level 2 will look like beyond the framework we set out some weeks ago – and everyone will remember the alert table that we have been using to date, but we want to put more detail yet again behind that. That detail will include for businesses, for transport, for health, for recreation, for education. I understand the importance of this information for businesses and others to plan, and even though we'll be releasing that detail on Thursday, in between times, in the lead up, we will be talking to sector leaders as we finalize some of the details around these different alert levels, beyond what's already in the public domain.

We are very aware of the need to get more of our economy running as soon as possible, and I know level 4 will be getting harder and repetitive for everyone. I do not underestimate the stresses and strains many of you will be experiencing at home the longer this goes on. Week three may, in fact, feel the hardest. We're coming around the bend, but we can't quite see the finish line, but our job this week remains the same and as important as ever. As I said last week, New Zealanders' efforts have been huge. Because of your work, we are in the position that many other countries are not. But now is not the time to deviate. As the Minister for sport recently said to me, "We can't squander a strong half-time lead by letting up or getting overly confident." Please stay home. Please stay in your bubble. Please help to break the train of transmission to save lives.

One last word of note, this morning, like many of you, I saw the reports of nurse Jenny from Invercargill being credited by Prime Minister Boris Johnson for his recovery. We have thanked our front-line health workers in New Zealand many times, and rightly so, but I wanted to add an acknowledgment that many, many Kiwis work in healthcare around the world. They show the same commitment, same care, same work ethic that they do here, and we're all very proud of them – especially of you, nurse Jenny. I'm happy now to take questions.

## **Speech 22: April 14 (JA22)**

Good afternoon. It's day 20 of our COVID-19 alert level 4 lockdown. Today I am joined by the Finance Minister Grant Robertson, who will shortly make some comments about the treasury scenarios for our economy which were released earlier today by the Treasury. But I want to start by recording that we have had a sad and sobering reminder of the need to stay the course today. With 4 more deaths from COVID-19 in the last 24 hours, our deadliest day to date. We always knew there would be more deaths even at level 4. And especially in cases where the virus enters a vulnerable community like an aged care facility. It is however a reminder of how much worse the spread and death toll would be had we not taken the actions we have taken to break the chain of transmission.

The Director General of Health and I've spoken frequently today and I want to reiterate the actions he is leading in an area where every country has faced vulnerability. In particular, the requirement for all DHBs to audit arrangements in aged care facilities, to ensure compliance with coded protocols and procedures. That should also help to identify any issues with supply and best practice use of PPE. He has also initiated a review into aged care facilities where COVID has already been present. As he said, COVID-19 is present in less than 1% of our aged care facilities. A stark contrast to the situation in many other countries. But as we have seen at Rosewood, we now know how devastating it can be when it gets there. The review will look at Rosewood but also the facilities where containment has been successful and we have had aged care facilities who have successfully managed to contain Covid-19. It is timely and I do endorse the quick action taken by the Director General on this, it was something I absolutely agree with and supported.

As I said yesterday, this is likely to be the most challenging week we face on lockdown as we see the beginnings of success in terms of getting the virus under control and numbers coming down, sitting alongside an increase in the number of deaths. Over the weekend and today, I have seen some commentary that is not unexpected. Commentary that reflects our success to date in stamping out the virus is reason enough to take our foot off the pedal. It is not. As the Director-General said, we are successfully over the peak. That is not the same thing as being out of the woods.

In the meantime, this week the Ministry of Health continues to undertake more analysis of the testing done to date seeking that DHBS expand, testing once again and further strengthening contact tracing efforts and the information around cases where it has not been possible to identify the source of the case. Now, while a small number, these cases, the ones of possible community transmission, are the most important to understand and have under control if we are to move out of level 4 with confidence.

We've also been reminded over the Easter break of the need for continued enforcement of alert level 4 rules. To give you a quick update of the numbers to date under Level 4 there have been 1452 breaches. So if our police have made 169 prosecutions, we did anticipate this would rise over time, with the police having used warnings, but progressed up the chain when those warnings have not been heard. Thousands of motorists were stopped at 661 Easter checkpoints, and I note the road toll was zero. The last time this occurred was in 2012. Most New Zealanders understand that now is not the time to lead up. We must not squander the good work that everyone has put in over the last 20 days.

I'll now turn to an announcement that relates to tertiary education. As a government pre COVID-19, we already had a very strong focus on trades training and in particular, with vocational education reforms and two years free trades training. The foundations for more New Zealanders enrolling in vocational education have already been put in place, but we know we need to do much more to support 10s of thousands of New Zealanders to retrain to get back into the workforce, possibly in an entirely different job. Education will be key to our economic recovery. Today I can confirm an immediate package of support for our tertiary students to continue and stay in their studies. We know these students often use part time work to fund their education work, which is no longer there. They are also facing the loss of support payments due to a learning break of more than three weeks as their providers put in place alternative forms of teaching. That's why cabinet has made some really practical decisions today, to help cover extra costs by increasing the student loan amount available for course-related costs for full time students from \$1000 to \$2000 on a temporary basis. To continue support payments such as student loans and allowances for students unable to study online for up to 8 weeks. And we've made technical changes to ensure that where students receive partial tuition fee refunds in 2020 because their course has been discontinued due to COVID-19, this will not affect their future entitlement to student loans, and with students are unable to complete a course of study in 2020 due to COVID-19, this will not affect their entitlement to fees free tertiary studies. We do not want to see students unfairly disadvantaged from discontinued courses. This gives flexibility during the lockdown and for four weeks beyond the extra support will be available from tomorrow. The Minister of Education, Chris Hopkins, Minister of Education Chris Hopkins will release more detail, but I know he would want to thank all those in the sector, particularly student representatives who have fit in their insights and supported their fellow students. I thank you too, and particularly want to acknowledge the other work that students are doing at this time to help on those vulnerable, including, I'm told, the Student Volunteer armies contact with food ordering and delivery services for over 65s, the medically vulnerable and families of healthcare workers or healthcare workers themselves.

Of course, tomorrow's officially the start of term 2 and I want to also thank our teachers for putting in place the distance learning to help parents during the start of the school term under lockdown. I think we're all doing a bit of learning at this time. Hopefully having Susie Cato back on our tellies will lighten the load for many. I'll now hand over to Minister Robertson for an update before taking questions. Minister Robertson.

### **Speech 23: April 16 (JA23)**

Welcome to today's update. We'll start with our usual update from Dr. Bloomfield, after which I'll share some of the additional work that has been done on alert levels over the past few weeks. I will forewarn you, my section will be a little bit longer than usual, but I'm sure you'll all appreciate why. First of all, Dr. Bloomfield.

[...] Thank you, Dr Bloomfield. Three and a half weeks ago, New Zealand was in a unique position. Unlike other countries, we had enough lead-in before COVID-19 reached our shores. That meant we could make a choice: we could allow a wave of devastation to hit us, like it has in other countries, or we could take decisive, pre-emptive action by going hard and early into lockdown to stop the spread of the disease in its tracks. We chose action, and the indications at this stage are promising. We will never know what would've happened if we'd taken the first path, but the projections were for thousands of deaths if the virus got away on us, many more sick and in hospital, and the country and our economy grinding to a halt regardless.

We should not confuse the success of our actions with overreaction, and there is plenty of proof around the world of the devastating result of responding too late. New Zealanders' collective actions and unity at level 4 has put us in the rare position where we can make choices about our next steps—because our fight hasn't just been against health impacts; it's been about stopping COVID from taking people's livelihoods, too. Our best economic strategy is still to win the fight against the virus—eliminate it—and that means we get out of prolonged restrictions on the way we live our lives sooner and move business into recovery sooner.

Overall, we have made a good start, but we need to keep going, and that means we need to start preparing for what could come next. Today, as promised, I will share more information about what life will look like at different COVID-19 alert levels. While I'll focus mainly on level 3, as that's the next step we will move to in time, information is also being made available today on levels 2 and level 1.

The first thing I want to really emphasize—and I cannot emphasize this enough—what I'm talking about today in no way foreshadows the decision that we'll be taking on Monday regarding the current lockdown. Today is instead about giving time for business, and, in fact, everyone, to think about what the different alert levels will mean for them, so when it comes time to move, we will be ready to move. Secondly, we will step down to level 3 in a way that is consistent with our goal to eliminate COVID-19 in New Zealand. The last thing we want to do when moving levels is give away the gains that we have won in lockdown, so that means that we will be considering seriously all of the data and information that we present daily to you as a Cabinet when we come to make that decision.

But let me start, then, with the principles of alert level 3. As the alert level system makes clear, and you'll remember the table we used when we first announced that, different levels allow different amounts of contact with one another, depending on how bad the spread of COVID-19 is. At alert level 4, the aim is to eliminate contact with each other, and that is what a full lockdown achieves. At level 3—restrict—there is still a high risk the virus can get out of control and bounce back, as we've seen in countries overseas, so the goal remains to restrict contact with one another as much as possible. That is why I recently described level 3 as the waiting room, or something like a recovery room. We have to wait and see if what we have done has worked. After a while, if we don't show further signs of illness, we can go back to a life that is a bit more normal, which is what alert level 2 really starts to feel like. If we deteriorate, then it's back to lockdown, at level 4.

And just like when you're recovering from an illness, you still primarily stay home, and that's the same message at level 3: stay home; save lives. It remains the most effective way to break the chain of transmission. There are some key differences, though, based on assessments of public health risk and evidence from overseas, aimed to help people and business to move forward while we are still in the recovery room.



Firstly, keep your bubble. The more we can limit the new people everyone is exposed to, the better. But at level 3, you can expand your bubble a small amount. If you have a caregiver that you need in your life, children who might be in a shared care arrangement, a de facto partner who is caring for others, or you're a single person who wants the company of a sibling, for example, you can extend your bubble. Keep it exclusive, though; keep it small.

Secondly, the principle for businesses and workplaces at level 3 moves from essential operations only to safe operations only. We still want to reduce contact with one another, so you must work from home if you can. If you cannot, because you work in an area like forestry or construction, you can return to your place of work if you apply the health and safety expectations we have established for COVID-19—in the same way that businesses currently operating have. That includes things like social distancing and good hygiene practices. The same applies for those who work in people's homes, like furniture removal, electricians, or plumbers—you can return to work, but keep your distance from your customers.

There are, however, some businesses that cannot open in their usual way because it involves far too much contact on too large a scale with members of the public. Public-facing bars, restaurants, and cafes remain closed, and so do malls and retail stores. But, unlike level 4, food delivery, drive-through, online shopping, or options like click and collect shopping can begin. The key principle here is simple: you cannot engage in face-to-face transactions, so use your phone, use your computer, use your car, or use an app.

There is a high level of responsibility that comes with reopening many businesses in this way, and it isn't without risk. We've consulted with major sectors like hospitality and retail on these changes, and we are working with other sectors on industry-specific guidelines to minimize risk, but at level 3 we cautiously start opening up our economy, albeit with significant mitigations. I know there'll be a number of questions around other businesses that you'll have. I can assure you that in the more detailed guidance that is available, some of those questions will certainly be answered.

Thirdly, at level 3 there will be a partial reopening of education. Early childhood centers and schools will be available, up to and including year 10 only, but attendance is purely voluntary. Our intention here is to create a place for children to go to learn if their parents need to return to work, but to do so safely. Children will be kept in their own school bubbles: small groups to try and limit their exposure to too many other children each day. For children who are able to, we still encourage them to remain home and be part of distance learning. Tertiary education will mostly be through distance learning, but with the exception of on-campus research that can't be done off campus, such as lab work and practical, hands-on learning such as trade courses, where the learning can happen in small groups with appropriate physical distancing. Courses where close contact is unavoidable will remain online only.

Travel restrictions remain. Previously, we have talked about keeping it local. At level 3, we will ask that you keep it regional. The principle here is that we know at level 3 more people will travel to work or to take children to school. We don't, however, want to take potential COVID cases into other parts of the country, so restricting movement to only what is necessary is still the goal here. When it comes to recreation, the principles also remain simple: keep it alone or in your bubble, keep it low risk, and also keep it non-motorized. That means we are still excluding things like boating and jet skis. That's simply because we know from the statistics these are still prone to accidents or breakdowns that can lead you to have contact with others. But there are other activities which you can undertake by yourself or within your bubble that we will be permitting: you can swim, you can surf, you can fish from the shore. However, I do want to add a word of caution here. Now is not the time to take up a new activity that you have never done before—it is too risky. The whole point at this level is to continue to really reduce down, as I've said before, your contact with others. If there is any sign of congregation, we will not hesitate to review these changes. So please, do not rush to places where others may congregate as well and treat it as a reunion with your long-lost swimming buddies.

At level 3, the principle of reducing contacts remains. So that means tough calls still on life events. Funerals will be able to go ahead, but they will not be able to have any more than 10 people—that includes for tangi as well. For weddings, the same number applies, but they can only be services; no meals, food, or receptions can take place. We're simply suggesting here that for those who wish to take part in a legal ceremony, they are able to. Sadly, level 3 is about reducing risks, and as you will have seen from some of our devastating clusters, life events means a major risk and only require one person to be carrying the illness to spread it to dozens of others.

Finally, you'll see from the description of level 3 there are more opportunities for you to come into contact with people outside your bubble. As a general rule of thumb, the goal of keeping two meters away from each other still applies. That's the gold standard. And for anyone who's ever wondered why, that's the distance you need from someone who may potentially be symptomatic if you are to remain away any potentially dangerous things like sneezes, droplets, coughs, and so on.

However, in some places, that will be more difficult. If you are in a workplace or an education facility, for instance—places, however, where we will be able to contact trace the people around you. Then, in these circumstances, one meter can apply. That's in keeping with the World Health Organization's recommendations of distance for someone who does not have symptoms. So, again, if it's people you know and that we can find if we need to, then one meter is a rule that we can apply in those circumstances.

Fundamentally, though, the more distance the better, particularly when it comes to strangers. In fact, now more than ever, as you come into contact with more people, we must keep our distance, wash our hands, keep yourself and your bubble safe, continue to act like you have COVID, and, I would add, to act like those around you and near you may have it too. Keep a note of where you have been, when you have been there, and who with. It will help if we ever find ourselves contacting you because of a potential COVID case. Small changes like this will make the world of difference.

There is extra risk and a high level of trust and responsibility that comes at level 3, if and when we move to it. The success of our lockdown and the majority of people showing they can follow the rules gives me confidence that the same level of discipline to keeping to the rules at level 3 continues to apply, if not more.

There'll no doubt be additional questions beyond the broad overview I've given today, and as I've said, details are available at the COVID website, and it includes much more of a description around some of what I've talked about. It does not mean we'll necessarily be able to provide every answer to every single scenario. We have given ourselves time, though, so if you're a business, in particular, and you need a question answered, please do reach out to MB for further information.

All workplaces, though, should begin to work on a plan for how they are managing risks and protecting workers and customers under COVID alert level 3, and these need to be made available at a worksite so staff can see what steps you as an employer are taking. We'll also be providing support for businesses to do this through a self-accreditation scheme of sorts, available online, and I'll say more about that next week.

Ultimately, level 3 is a progression. It's not a rush to normality. Many things will feel the same as they do now. It is not until level 2 that there is significantly lower risk to public health and where there can be a significant loosening of controls on people's movement and your ability to socialize with one another. But there is a reason for that. We want to get to that place sooner, and when we get there, we want to stay there. In fact, Treasury modelling tells us that we are better off in the longer term to stay in levels 4 and 3 a bit longer now and defeat the virus rather than moving too quickly and having to move backwards and forwards between the levels or stay in them longer overall.

We have the opportunity to do something no other country has achieved—elimination of the virus—but it will continue to need a team of five million behind it. Under lockdown, we've shown our ability to put in place a virtual wall that is breaking the chain of transmission. Our new line of defense when we reach level 3 is common sense, following the rules, and trusting one another, and I believe we can do that. We're now happy to take your questions.

#### **Speech 24: April 19 (JA24)**

Good afternoon. I hope the day is treating everyone well. As is our usual practice, I'll begin by handing over to Dr. Bloomfield for the latest update on cases and testing numbers, and then we'll run through a bit of an update before taking your questions. Dr. Bloomfield.

[...] Thank you, Dr. Bloomfield. If I could take the opportunity to add my thanks to the members of our public health units from around the country, who, as Dr. Bloomfield has said, have been working 24/7 for a long time now as part

of that really critical part of our process for managing COVID-19, and that is contact tracing. I actually hope that sometime next week, I might be able to take a Zoom call with some of the team leaders for those PHUs, just to pass on my thanks for the role they play, that most New Zealanders may not have even known existed until now and yet were a critical part of the response to the measles outbreak we had only some months ago and, off the back of that, coming straight into COVID-19. They're doing an exceptional job.

As I have no doubt everybody in New Zealand is acutely aware, Cabinet meets tomorrow to discuss our current COVID alert level 4 and to determine whether to extend it beyond the current deadline, which is, you'll be aware, midnight on Wednesday. Before I go over how we as a group of Ministers will make that decision, I want to acknowledge that we have been successful to date in rolling out our plan because we've had a plan, and we've stuck to it, and we've done it together. We have stayed home, we have saved lives, and we are breaking the chain of transmission. And the numbers back this up, with the data coming through from Google location tracking showing a huge drop in traffic in our cities as well as far fewer visits to places like beaches and parks. I know it hasn't been easy, but it has been working.

No matter the outcome of Cabinet's deliberations tomorrow, it is important to remember that this is going to be a long-term project for us all. A move to alert level 3, whenever it comes, is not a return to pre - COVID-19 life for any of us. What eventually changes at alert level 3 is that more of the economy is able to come back online, but our social lives, sadly, will not. If we move too quickly in that area, we undo the good work we have done collectively over some very long days indeed.

With that in mind, Cabinet will meet at 10.30 a.m. tomorrow—we have given it an earlier time frame so that we have time for those deliberations—and then we will be sharing the decision that's been made with all of you at 4 p.m. the same day. Dr. Bloomfield will be joining me for that announcement, given the strong role that Health plays in the decision making and the deliberations that Ministers will be a part of tomorrow.

Just a quick reminder that there are several things that Ministers will consider—and these were criteria discussed by Ministers some time ago. That criteria includes that the Director- General of Health is satisfied, or there be a level of satisfaction, that there is sufficient data from a range of sources, including testing and surveillance, so public health experts, statisticians, and modelers can have reasonable certainty that undetected community transmission is unlikely; secondly, there is sufficient rigorous and rapid case identification in contact-tracing, with surge capacity available in the case of an outbreak; thirdly, our self- isolation, quarantine, and border measures are robust and adhered to; and, finally, there is capacity in the health system more generally, including the workforce, ICU capacity, plus the availability of PPE for those for whom it is recommended.

Alongside that, we will look at the evidence of the effects of the measures on the economy and on society more broadly; public attitudes towards the measures and the extent to which people and businesses understand, accept, and are overall complying with them; and the ability to operationalize restrictions, including satisfactory detailed implementation planning by our all-of-Government team and Government agencies. That, essentially, is all of the information, data, and analysis that we will provide in determining New Zealand's next move.

Now, I share this with you because we have been open and transparent throughout this fight against COVID-19, and I personally believe really strongly that it is only fair. Since we are all in this together, we need to all keep working together for success, and that means us sharing with everyone the factors we'll be taking into consideration and the data we use. Every day when we come down and share what we know about our testing and our positive cases, how they relate to clusters—that's information that I receive only a few hours before the public receives it, and that's because this is a mission that we're all on together, and that is why we've been transparent in sharing all of that information as we've gone along.

If we can look back, though, it is incredible to think of how swiftly we all acted together. It's hard to believe that it is only 32 days since we closed our borders to all but returning New Zealanders, on 19 March; 30 days since we announced our COVID alert level system, which was on 21 March; and 25 days since the lockdown began, at 11.59 on Wednesday, March 25<sup>th</sup>. During that time, our focus has been to protect the health of New Zealanders. Alongside this, we've acted to cushion the economic blow as well, to keep as many New Zealanders in jobs as possible and to help businesses remain viable. We do not underestimate the economic impact this has taken on everyone, and that's

why we've had that multibillion-dollar set of investments: the 12-week wage subsidy scheme, the Government-backed business finance scheme with banks, the business support package for our smaller and medium-sized organizations, and extra financial support for students.

The decision to move New Zealand to alert level 4 was the right one for our health and for our economy. And as you will have heard many of us say, the best thing for the economy has always been to stop the virus. But I do want to finish today by saying thank you, in that vein, to a very special group, many of whom have been going through an incredibly hard time but who I have often heard reflecting that in spite of what we're experiencing, that they still recognize the collective mission we all have right now. That group are our small-business owners and operators. Nobody underestimates how hard this situation is for all of you, but I want to thank you for pouring so much effort into keeping your staff employed and working so hard to keep everyone afloat for the time when you can get back up and running. We've put \$9 billion into the wage subsidy to help keep more than 1.5 New Zealanders in jobs, but that wouldn't have worked without businesses making applications and giving their all to keep their staff, who many of them consider their family, connected to work.

We are in this together, because that is the only way this will work. But I do want to say thank you for your efforts, and I know New Zealanders will continue to keep acting together to stay safe. We're happy to take your questions.

### **Speech 25: April 20 (JA25)**

Over the past few weeks, I've often used my time at this podium to acknowledge the people on the front line. Today I want to remember the people in New Zealand who have lost someone to COVID-19, or the many more who had the terror of almost losing someone. Throughout this pandemic there have been individuals who I have tracked the progress of. I didn't know their names, but I knew their status, and I still get a phone call for every individual person that we lose to COVID-19 in New Zealand.

We may be amongst a small number of countries where that is still able to happen, where the numbers we have lost have been small. But we cannot forget that every number is someone's father, someone's mum, a relative, or a friend, and someone that we have all been united in an effort to protect and to save. And that is why we, as a country, took on the challenge of staring down COVID-19, because we believe that decisive action, going hard and going early, gave us the very best chance of stamping out the virus—and it has.

We have done what very few countries have been able to do. We have stopped a wave of devastation. Our transmission rate—that is, the number of cases that each person with the virus passes it on to—is now 0.48, less than half a person each. Overseas, the average is 2.5 people. We have amongst the lowest number of confirmed cases per 100,000 people in the world. We have a relatively low proportion of serious cases and, according to the Oxford University Coronavirus Government Response Tracker, one of the lowest mortality rates in the world. Nearly every case identified since April 1 is primarily as a result of overseas travel, or contact with someone with the virus, and often in existing clusters. The number of individual cases that we don't have an obvious connection in that period now stands at only eight.

Our testing has scaled up and we have now tested over 85,000 New Zealanders, one of the highest testing rates per capita in the world. In the last few days, we expanded testing to include random testing in Queenstown, the Waikato, Canterbury, and Auckland. We have tested over a thousand people this way and so far have produced not a single positive result. The Director-General of Health is confident that there is currently no widespread undetected community transmission in New Zealand. In short, the effort of our team of 5 million has broken the chain of transmission and taken a quantum leap forward in our goal to eliminate the virus.

Elimination doesn't mean zero cases; it means zero tolerance for cases. It means when a case emerges—and it will—we test, we contact trace, we isolate, and we do that every single time with the ambition that when we see COVID, we eliminate it. That is how we will keep our transmission rate under 1, and it is how we will keep succeeding—and we have seen success. You—all of you—have stopped the uncontrolled explosion of COVID-19 in New Zealand, and I couldn't feel prouder of the start that we have made together. But I also feel a huge responsibility to ensure that we do not lose any of the gains that we have made either.

On that basis, New Zealand will move out of alert level 4 lockdown at 11.59 p.m. on Monday April 27, one week from today. We will then hold at alert level 3 for two weeks, before reviewing how we are tracking again, and making further decisions at Cabinet on 11 May. In making this decision, Cabinet discussed in depth all of the data we have shared with all of you daily. We looked at the gains we have made in our results, but also our systems. We considered that the longer we are in lockdown, the less likely it is we will need to go back.

We also considered moving alert levels on 23 April, which is in just 48 hours' time. The sacrifice made to date has been huge, and Cabinet wanted to make sure we lock in our gains and give ourselves some additional certainty. Waiting to move alert levels next week costs us just two more business days but gives us much greater long-term health and economic returns down the track. It means we are less likely to have to go backwards. Ultimately, we have taken a balanced approach and one that the Director-General of Health not only supported, but also recommended. This time we now have will be used to prepare, on all fronts.

This week, businesses will be allowed to get ready to open—such as employers re-entering premises to receive stock if necessary—but we ask that, in doing so, they stick to social distancing and their bubbles. This is not an early move out of alerts; it is merely a matter of preparation.

Same principle applies for preparing schools and the education system. Schools and early learning centers can be accessed this week for cleaning, maintenance, and any other preparations. The current plan is for schools to be able to reopen for a teacher-only day on 28 April as part of their preparation, and we expect those who need to attend to be able to from 29 April. I do want to caution, it may take a bit longer for some schools and early learning centers to be ready, and the Minister of Education will continue to work alongside the education sector in those preparations.

And from a health perspective, this week testing will continue, including giving ongoing public confidence that we are reaching isolated, rural, Maori, and Pacific communities. Contact tracing will be bolstered even further, and we'll continue to use the best evidence, advice, and modelling we have to make daily decisions to serve New Zealanders.

The most important thing to remember in the meantime, though, is that all of this preparation takes us to an alert level in one week's time—a recovery room of sorts—that has many restrictions. Yes, alert level 3 allows more economic activity like construction, manufacturing, and forestry, but it does not allow more social activity—and for good reason. If we want to make sure that we are a health success story and ensure our economy can start to operate again without the virus taking off, we need to get this next phase right. The worst thing we can do for our country is to yo-yo between levels, with all of the uncertainty that this will bring. We need to move with confidence, and that does mean following the rules.

So here is a reminder of the principles for level 3 when we get there. One: stay home. If you are not at work, school, exercising, or getting essentials, then you must be at home—the same as alert level 4. Two: work and learn from home if you can. We still want the vast majority of people working from home and children and young people learning from home. At-risk students and staff should also stay at home, and they will be supported to do so. Early learning centers and schools will physically be open for up to year 10 families that need them. Three: make your business COVID-19 safe. COVID-19 has spread in workplaces, so the quid pro quo of being able to open is doing it in a way that doesn't spread the virus. Important industries like construction, manufacturing, forestry will be open, as will retail as long as it is contactless.

Four: stay regional. You can exercise at parks or beaches within your region, but the closer to home the better. Activities must be safe, keep 2 meters away from anyone not in your bubble, and make minimal trips. Five: keep your bubble as small as possible. If you need to, at level 3 you can expand your bubble a small amount to bring in close family, isolate people, or caregivers. Six: wash your hands often with soap, then dry them. Cough and sneeze into your elbow. And seven:—and this is a really important one—if you're sick, stay at home, get advice from the GP or Healthline about getting a test, and quickly. I cannot emphasize this enough.

All of our success in contact tracing and isolation relies on knowing as soon as we can when you are unwell. There is no stigma to COVID-19. We will only be successful if everyone is willing to play their part in finding it wherever it is.

These rules will be so important. We all want to continue to progress down the levels. The best hope of getting back to normal as soon as possible is never getting ahead of where we are right now. So to recap to anyone just tuning in, we are currently in lockdown and are staying there for the next week. From Tuesday morning 28 April, we will move to level 3 and stay there for two weeks. Those two weeks gives us another cycle of transmission to assess how we are doing. From there, we will move if we can and if we're ready, but only when we're ready and only when it's safe.

And so this weekend—Anzac weekend—enjoy the company of your bubble, stay local, reflect on the amazing sacrifices of our forebears. Decades ago they came together in the most testing of circumstances, half a world away, and helped forge who we are today. It was a very, very different battle than the one we are in now, but the character of who we are as a country remains exactly the same. So please, stay strong, stay home, be kind, and let's finish what we started. I'll now hand over to Dr. Bloomfield.

### **Speech 26: April 22 (JA26)**

Welcome to day 28 of level 4. I'll hand over to Dr. Bloomfield for his update, and then we'll run through a few pieces of government news before we take questions. Dr. Bloomfield.

[...] Thank you, Dr. Bloomfield. I just want to pick up on Dr. Bloomfield's reference to the fact that there were three cases today amongst our confirmed cases who were connected to overseas travel. This is just an opportunity for me to highlight again that regardless of moving to alert level three, New Zealanders who are returning home will continue to be quarantined and isolated in government facilities at alert level three. That will continue on. We have given no endpoint to that part of our response to COVID. It is an intrinsic part of our response, and it is not changing because we are moving alert levels.

To give you an update on numbers, we currently have 2,403 people in government-provided facilities, essentially hotels. The number in quarantine, so those who we are testing or who have symptoms is 97 with the remainder being in isolation. But again, in those hotels. I wanted to make that clear in case there was any confusion amongst the public over whether that would change. It will not.

In terms of government news more broadly, you will have heard and seen that we are preparing, as Dr. Bloomfield pointed out, to transition New Zealand to alert level 3 next week. Level 3 information has been shared, and many of you have been here for that process, and it's continuing to be updated and communicated as there was some smaller pieces of work that we needed further advice on. Schools and businesses are preparing as we speak for that move from next Tuesday as well. Safety, of course, remains paramount, and I know that's top of mind for employers and workplaces as they make the necessary preparations to have their teams who cannot work from home reenter the workforce.

On the larger end of the scale, New Zealand's largest infrastructure project, the Auckland City Rail Link, will be back to work post-lockdown to help support jobs in the construction sector. 200 workers will resume construction works on Tuesday at CRL sites, at Britomart, Lower Queen Street, Albert Street, Aotea, Karangahape Road, Mount Eden, and on the Southern Line at Otahuhu, and this will ramp up to pre-pandemic workforce, which was 400 over the week that then follows.

We've worked really hard to cushion the blow from COVID-19 with initiatives like the wage subsidy and advance payments to transport contractors, but getting transport infrastructure projects back underway safely is part of our transition out of level 4. Of course, measures appropriate for level 3 are being put in place, including restricting access to sites, having workers maintain physical distancing, and providing protective clothing where that is necessary. Waka Kotahi New Zealand Transport Agency projects and non-essential State highway maintenance will also be able to resume under level 3 as well, but with strict health and safety protocols. NZTA is working with contractors on specific COVID-19 plans for each project to keep workers and the public safe.

In the meantime, as you'll hear me continually repeat, New Zealand is still at elite level 4, and while I know there will be things we're all looking forward to under alert level 3, we must not risk the gains that we have made, or that

many New Zealanders have made sacrifices for over the last four weeks. Police have told me that while 99.9% of us are respecting the measures put in place, there are still some who are choosing to flout the rules and I have the numbers on that for you. As at 6:00 PM yesterday there had been 4,128 breaches of the CDM and Health Acts, 433 prosecutions, 3,580 official warnings, 115 youth referrals. More than 5,600 reassurance patrols at essential businesses and crime prevention patrols and neighborhoods and business districts have been carried out in just the past two days. Each and every one of these people involved in breaches, risks undoing the work of others. So again, I say please do not travel unnecessarily or gather. Police will be conducting checkpoints, and they will be enforcing the rules, and they do that to keep all of us safe.

Finally, you may recall that on Monday I mentioned that some workplaces, as they prepare for the return into workplaces that they need to return to, will be using these next few days to prepare. That includes premises being cleaned in preparation as well. So today my thanks and appreciation goes to our cleaners, and not before time. I've had many letters during our lockdown outlining their essential work during alert level 4, such as from another essential business, a meat processor, crediting their cleaners as a core part of their success in continuing to move products around the country for New Zealanders. From our courts who say their cleaning staff are the first line of defense in keeping our courts safe, often working extra shifts at all times of the day and night. And even Rose, a cleaner at Otahuhu police station, who currently works 13-hour days. These are our essential workers, and I hope we continue to recognize them as that long after this pandemic has passed. Thank you for keeping us safe. Now we're ready for your questions.

#### **Speech 27: April 23 (JA27)**

Today is day 29 of COVID-19 alert 4 level. We will start as per usual with Doctor Bloomfield.

[...] Thank you, doctor Bloomfield. Later today, the director of Civil Defense Emergency Management services, Stuart Blake, will give an update on what our civil defense groups across the country have been doing to support vulnerable New Zealand and he'll also be joined by police Commissioner Andy Costa for a briefing. The work that's been done by our civil defense group maybe going unnoticed to the vast majority of New Zealanders. While everyone is in their bubbles, but it is work that keeps people who would otherwise be without fed warm and well. We have been working hard to ensure that we're meeting need where it exists, which is why yesterday we put another 30 million into our civil defense group so they can keep providing food parcels, household goods and accommodation where it's required, and that follows the immediate assistance you remember some time ago of \$27 million put into support that work. And so on the ground, 16 local civil defense groups are doing what they do best, they're coordinating across all government agencies, organizations including NGOs, EWE and community based groups. While COVID-19 may have seemed like a different kind of emergency to what we've dealt with in recent years, like floods and fires, the role of civil defense is very much the same. Ensuring communities, individuals, families and farmers have the support they need. There is an 800 number for every group that people can call if they are out of supplies or struggling to get basic food, they've been providing emergency accommodation, a stopgap service before they are refueled to invest temporary accommodation service. This is business as usual for them, but they also now have powers activated by the state of national emergency and support of the COVID-19 responses you're all well aware.

So far that's been used for things like closing roads to prevent vehicle access to Backcountry to stop activities that might result in risky activity. In Taranake they have moved on freedom campers, in Canterbury they've requisitioned the car park for use as a community based assistance center. Coordination is a role not to be underestimated. It's what helps get what's required to those who need it most. And I do want to pass on my thanks to the amazing we've been done by those civil defense groups in our local areas. Short word on hunting. While food parcels keep family, our families fed, we know that in many parts of New Zealand, hunting is also a part of providing for many people's families and far more. You would have seen that decisions have now been made for this activity alert Level 3. Hunting can go ahead under alert Level 3 so long as you stay in your region so long as you stay in your bubble, and we're asking that people please don't put themselves at risk of needing rescue. So that means don't use quad bikes, offroad motorbikes or any motorized vehicles for the purposes of hunting. Dockland is closed for tramping and other activities and also for hunting at Level 3. On private land you will of course need landowners permission. Hunting is an important part of life in many New Zealanders. In many places around the country it fills freezing for the months

ahead and also rides farmland off pest. These restrictions allow for it to have been safely and in a way that minimizes the risk of losing the great, great progress that we've made and also is in keeping with the principles that we've set out for alert level 3 around travel, around bubbles and around activity. We've had discussions with Fish and Game about the duck hunting season, as many of you know the season is gazetted in advance and was due to begin on the 2nd of May. Cabinet was concerned that under the Level 3 guidelines for hunting, some people would be excluded from the season, perhaps in part because they may need to go to distance to where they may need to be. There were also concerns that if it started soon and people weren't able to take part, it would end up being a shorter season for some people. For that reason, the duck hunting season will go ahead in the second weekend after New Zealand moves to alert level 2.

The season once it gets underway will be extended to make up for the delay. I know this will be disappointing for many, but we recognize that opening weekend is quite social for many people, and we still must reduce our contact at level 3 as much as possible. This decision means all those who usually take part in duck hunting will be able to, just on a slightly different time frame than otherwise. I also want to be clear that hunting will be able to resume normally at level 2 once we get there. Just today is not that day.

On Saturday Anzac Day I will be one of many New Zealanders who will take part in an initiative called *Stand at dawn*. The RSA has encouraged all of us to commemorate our service personnel by standing at the end of our driveways or near our letter boxes at 6:00 AM, to stand at dawn. I know how hard it will be this year. Our first Anzac Day in History where services have been cancelled due to COVID-19, but that doesn't mean we can't show our support as a collective. As storm breaks we can stand on the side of our driveways and together in silence pay tribute to those we should never forget. We can still take time to pause, reflect and pay our respects to the people who have given so much to us. This year we are calling for all Kiwis worldwide to stand at their letterbox, their front door, their balcony or their essential place of work at 6:00 AM on April the 25th. The official Dawn service broadcast will be on Aaron's National radio at 6:00 AM and will include an address by the Minister of Defense and Minister for Veterans, Ron Mark. If anyone wants to find out more details, I encourage you to visit [standatdawn.com](http://standatdawn.com). And so in the spirit of recognizing those who have been a part of our COVID-19 response, today I want to thank the New Zealander defense force, past, present and future. For all that you do, to keep pace to keep us safe, to help us recover from natural disasters, to help our Pacific neighbors to reflect our strength of spirit across the world and more recently, for all your work on COVID-19. Some 60 expert planners and logistics personnel have helped with central government operations such as health and police centers as well as regional emergency operations centers. More than 600 have helped to manage isolation facilities and distribute care packages to those in need. This comes alongside usual works such as search and rescue and disaster relief. I'd like to make special mention of the cruise from 5 Squadron and 40 Squadron of the Royal New Zealand Air Force who have also been flying relief flights in support of our Pacific neighbors in Vanuatu, Fiji and Tonga who've bring hard hit by Tropical Cyclone Herald. We as always are grateful for your service. Thank you. I'm now happy to take your question.

### **Speech 28: April 27 (JA28)**

I'll ask Doctor Bloomfield to begin with an update for you all.

[...] Thank you, Doctor Bloomfield. We are now living hours away from the lifting of level 4 and of the strictest constraints placed on New Zealanders in modern history. It's been nearly five weeks living and working in ways that just two months ago would have seemed impossible, but we did and we have done it together. Let me run through a few of the numbers that show how far we've come. The figures that we've been working towards in order to be able to confidently move to Level 3. Our testing has grown from obviously zero pre COVID-19 to the capacity to process up to 8000 tests per day. That's resulted in us having one of the highest testing rates in the world per capita. We have very low percentage coming back positive each day, as low as 0.05% last week and only 0.17% today. This provides strong evidence that there is not widespread transmission that is going undetected. The virus has a transmission rate of around 2.5 in most places without controls. Under lockdown, this has dropped to 0.4, less than half a person infected by each individual, and for the last few days our cases have been in the single digits with as you will have heard from Doctor Bloomfield today, just one confirmed case.



It is worth pausing to digest those numbers. They are incredible and they are thanks to the sacrifices that every single New Zealander has made. As we entered level 4, modelling from Professor Sean Hindy gave us insights into a scenario in which we did not lock down, and in that scenario a steady case numbers seeded an epidemic that potentially would have seen a period of as many as 1000 cases per day. We will never know what would have actually have happened without our Level 4 restrictions, but we can look overseas and see that this devastating scenario has played out in many other countries. Through our cumulative actions, we have avoided the worst. Tragically, what we've been unable to stop as a loss of 19 New Zealanders to COVID-19. Numbers of course mean nothing to their family and loved ones, and nothing can take away their grief. All I can do is say again to those people is that our thoughts and sympathies are with you. We send them our love in their time of loss, as we do to anyone who has lost someone during lockdown and may have been able unable to be with them or to farewell them as they would have wished. This has been one of, I think, the hardest elements of level 4.

Of course, the ambition we all have is to confidently reach the position where we can bring back the social contact that we all miss. But to do it confidently we need to move slowly and we need to move cautiously. We must make sure that we do not let the virus run away on us again and cause a new wave of cases and deaths. To succeed, we must hunt down the last few cases of the virus. This is like looking for a needle in a haystack, and we need your help to finish the job we have started. There is no widespread undetected community transmission in New Zealand. We have won that battle, but we must remain vigilant if we're to keep it that way. That includes safely returning more New Zealanders to work, enabling more businesses to reopen, and allowing some of the recreational activities we have missed in the past four weeks.

As you will have heard me say repeatedly, it is not and cannot be a return to pre COVID-19 life. That day will come, but it is not here yet. To get there, our team of 5,000,000 needs to have zero tolerance for cases to complete our goal of eliminating the virus at Level 3. If you're unwell, stay home. If you have a runny nose, a sore throat, a cough, get a test, let's make sure that we keep those testing rates up. We continue with our contact tracing and isolation. That's how we'll finish this job.

As you know, we will be at Level 3 for two weeks before cabinet makes a further decision on next steps on Monday the 11th of May. In order to consider a move to level 2 will consider the same factors we have for previous moves. Continued extensive testing, and what that's telling us, continuing with our rapid contact tracing, understanding exactly where each new case came from and how it connects to our existing cases. In confidence that we do not have undetected community transmission. I am optimistic that we can continue on a path of success, but let me quickly clear about two things. First, we can only do this if we all continue to pull together, and secondly, I will not risk the gains we've made and the health of New Zealanders.

So if we need to remain at Level 3, we will. Our priority as it has been throughout these recent weeks, is the health of New Zealanders, because that's also the way that we can protect livelihoods. Of course, we've also put measures in place to cushion the economic impact by keeping as many New Zealanders in jobs as possible, and by providing assistance to ensure as many Kiwi businesses as possible remain viable. We'll continue to do this, but I know what everyone wants as a return to the day when that is no longer required either.

Before I conclude, a quick overview of how we'll be running the week ahead. Tomorrow cabinet meets from 10:00 AM. The house sits Tuesday to Thursday from 2:00 till 6:00 PM with Question Time and other business including a ministerial statement on Tuesday. Today will be the last day of the regular joint press conferences between myself and the Director General of Health. I know that many people around the country have regularly tuned in to receive information and advice during level 4, and so that's why I want to preserve my thanks for the day to Doctor Bloomfield. I consider New Zealand to be very lucky to have a public servant of Doctor Bloomfield's calibre leading the health response. His background in public health has meant I consider New Zealand to be amongst those countries who are lucky to have their expertise in leading our response one that considers the health and wellbeing of New Zealanders in every respect. And so doctor Bloomfield, it's been a real honour. It won't be the last time you see us both up here, but the last of the regular times and I thank the team that supports Dr Bloomfield as well. From tomorrow the Ministry of Health will continue their daily updates at 1:00 PM. I'll return to my normal schedule post cabinet press conferences and daily media stand ups separately before the house, and most days there will be government announcements from this podium as we move through level 3 and increase our focus on the

government's economic response to the virus. I anticipate at the time that we make announcements on whether or not we're moving from Level 3 that again, I'm likely to be joined by Doctor Bloomfield at that point. Finally, please remember the rules for Level 3 and now that you have the opportunity please, if you are taking part in a bit of contactless retail over the coming days, think about your local businesses, they need all our support. Happy to take your questions.

### **Speech 29: April 28 (JA29)**

Good afternoon. Welcome everyone to day 1 of alert Level 3. I want to begin by stressing that at alert Level 3 we are not out of the woods. As I have said before, it is a recovery room of sorts, to assess if the incredible work that New Zealanders have done at level 4 to break the virus's chain of transmission and prevent further community outbreak has worked. As Susie Wiles said today, there may still be some smoldering ashes out there, and they have the potential to become a wildfire again if we give them the chance. It can take from 2 to 10 days for people to have been exposed to COVID-19 to come down with symptoms. That wouldn't mean we wouldn't smell the smoke for a few weeks and that could put us back where we started before the lockdown, in quote.

So with more people going back to work today, we need to be even more vigilant at Level 3 to prevent any inadvertent spreading of the virus. We must continue to stay home where possible, including for work and education. Please stay regional and limit nonessential travel, and even though you can expand your bubble, keep it as small as possible and exclusive. And finally, if you're sick, stay home and contact your GP or health line and get tested. It may feel like a minor symptom to you, but it could be a significant issue for all of us. What Level 3 does represent, however, is the move towards getting our economy moving again, to getting more New Zealanders back to work, and to opening more of our businesses. Businesses restarting at Level 3 we'll see around 400,000 more New Zealanders back at work, taking the total to around 1,000,000 Kiwis working. At Level 3, around 75% of the economy is operating with key sectors like building and construction, forestry manufacturing and contactless retail starting back up. Importantly, major infrastructure projects start up again today. Over 1000 road and rail construction workers are back working on major projects like Transmission Gully and the CRL in Auckland. However, we also know that the lockdown has displaced many workers and there is real need for jobs in our community. The government, we will do all we can to ensure we fight the economic impacts of the virus and the same way we did the health threat with unity, with fast support by looking after one another. I'm joined here today by Minister for Social Development, Carmel Cipolloni, who have more to say on further measures we have put in place to support workers and businesses, including an online job platform to keep workers and companies connected, extra employment centers and agreement with industry on providing rapid micro credentials for people needing to retain. I'll hand over to Minister Cipolloni.

### **Speech 30: April 29 (JA30)**

Good afternoon, welcome to day two of Alert Level 3. It may surprise some viewers today to see me here alongside Dr. Bloomfield because you will have heard me say that recently was a sit down to be our last for the foreseeable future press conference together. But you will also have heard me repeatedly say that life at Level 3 is very similar to life at level 4 and so we decided to extend that term to the way that we are treating it with our press conferences. So after some feedback you will find us here together till the remainder of level 3 concludes for the most part, with ongoing appearances from other ministers and other agencies as part of the response to COVID-19. I'll hand over though now for the health update from Doctor Bloomfield.

[...] Thank you, doctor Bloomfield. I wanna start by reminding people in the same way that Doctor Bloomfield has that we are not out of the woods yet. While our case numbers remain low, we will still have cases and we have seen with our large clusters in New Zealand that it only takes one person to potentially affect many. With that in mind, we continue to take a firm stance with the enforcement of rules at Level 3. This is our waiting room, and so we need to make sure that we're vigilant in the way that we treat it. The rules are ultimately in place for a reason, and that reason is to keep us safe, but to also move us as quickly as we can into other alert levels. Police recorded 104

breaches in the 1<sup>st</sup> 18 hours of alert Level 3. The vast majority of these resulted in warnings, but 21 people have been prosecuted and 71 warnings issued. In addition, 742 complaints of businesses not complying with Level 3 rules were made most related, though, interestingly, most related to a lack of social distancing and business operating practices. MB, MPI, and other agencies will be following up on a further proportion of these complaints, agencies have been tasked in particular cases where they've triaged 61 cases, in particular, are being followed up on. So our preference is to educate and engage with businesses to ensure they're operating within the rules, we will not hesitate to take firmer measures if required.

I asked a couple of questions this morning, particularly if some of the images I've seen of areas and there were a couple of persistent photos that lingered around from some places in particular, and I've been told that MB and Health have actively reached out to some of those businesses to make sure that they are working with them on the ground to improve their practices to stop congregation at their place of business.

I want to update you today on early figures we have to hand on school and ECE attendance on the first day back today. Data from 10:30 AM this morning shows that 7713 children attending an early learning service and 11,846 attending a school. This represents 4% attendance at ECA and 1% attendance in schools. Keeping in mind though, for those numbers we've had reporting from 37% of early learning services and 55% of schools, so these numbers will be updated, but early indications are that New Zealanders continue to take our lockdown at Level 3 very seriously, that there remains an ongoing commitment to cementing what we've done, and therefore learning and working from home if that's possible. I do wanna thank everyone who is doing that, though I know distance learning and having children at home while you're working can be very hard, but these early numbers demonstrate the ongoing commitment people are showing and New Zealand's ongoing commitment to not seeing the 2nd wave of infection in New Zealand.

Finally, I want to talk about New Zealand's small businesses, many of whom will now be back at work, but some who will not. We have already put in place the wage subsidy scheme to help with what is usually firms largest cost wages, and today I can share news of further work that we are doing to help with commercial routes. As many of you will know, we've already agreed to push out deadlines on lease terminations when someone moves into arrears, but it is clear that this alone would not be enough for many businesses. We need to provide more reassurance as much as we're able to within the law. Well, though we cannot currently impose a commercial rent reduction if we speak to that a few times here, we have asked commercial tenants and landlords to work together to reach a fair agreement. However, some parties on both sides of the contract appear unwilling to renegotiate payment terms with officials advising that some landlords are demanding full rent from tenants who have been unable to trade for several weeks and cannot afford it. While some well-resourced tenants have written to landlords declaring that they refuse to pay any rent for several months, Minister Little discussed options with other ministers at Cabinet Committee this morning.

I can confirm that we are actively working on measures under which parties to a commercial lease would be expected to consider written concessions in whole or in part for a period with the response to COVID-19 has had a material impact on business. We've heard the call for extra support from small business over and above that already provided through the wage subsidy and tax measures and we are working actively to resolve that. So on principle we've supported the work Minister Little is doing, we expect papers to come shortly and as soon as those final decisions and work has been completed by the Ministry of Justice will be sharing it. I do want to acknowledge that something similar has been worked up in Australia. That code of conduct design that stands still hasn't been legislated. That needs to happen at a state level. So we're working actively on some are looking at some of the similarities of what they've done here and what will be workable under our Property Act in New Zealand.

Finally, it was my privilege during a Level 4 lockdown to thank all of our essential workers and others who have done an amazing job and now at Alert Level 3 I'm receiving many many examples of businesses using good old Kiwi ingenuity to open up at Level 3 with contactless transactions. Today I want to highlight a couple of examples from what I know will be the mixed food and beverage sector, because the local and events website has collated in one place nearly 30 food businesses that gives them locals can now access, noting how to order and how to collect, and some of you will have seen coverage of the Auckland Coffee shop extending a plank of wood from which to serve up their flat whites at an appropriate distance. I do wanna say good on to everyone who is working so hard to innovate,

keep their customers safe but get also their staff back to work. It's incredible to see and it makes people feel very proud given the difficult circumstances people are operating under. Okay, we're happy to take your questions.

### **Speech 31: May 4 (JA31)**

Today is day 7 of every Level 3. While we can take heart in recording no new cases today, the result reflects the situation that ultimately reflects the end of lockdown and alert level 4. Not the greater, the effect of greater activity Level 3. So despite this result, my message remains the same. As I note, does the message of Doctor Ashley Bloomfield. Stay the course. We cannot afford to squander the good work to date when our end goal is so close and within reach.

Next Monday we will make the decision on whether or not we will move to alert level 2. That day represents the end of a two week life cycle, as it were, a period of transmission of the virus. We need everyday between now and next Monday to know for sure that we succeeded in locking in the gains of level 4, recovered effectively in our waiting room of Level 3, and are in the position to move down again and give New Zealanders back greater freedoms. In making our decision, we will be assessing if there have been low to no cases for several days proceeding. It will mean knowing where every new case over the past two weeks has come from. It will mean ongoing evidence and confidence of no widespread community transmission. So we need to not get ahead of ourselves. Stick to our bubble and to finish the job that we've started. Related to this, the latest Google tracking data for the last weekend of our Level 4 lockdown came out over the weekend. Overall, it shows we did exceptionally well and that for the duration of lockdown, we maintained very consistent levels of low amounts of movement. Trips to parks and places of recreation did experience an uptick in the last week, and that is something we need to keep an eye on at Level 3, just in terms of when we are out and about maintaining physical distancing. However, we did better than many other countries we compare ourselves to and the ongoing commitment to physical distancing and staying at home has no doubt been the biggest contributor to our rapid drop in cases at level 4. Your efforts, New Zealand, have put us at the front of the peg and everyone should feel very proud of that.

Cabinet today discussed what alert Level 2 would look like in the event that we moved there and when we're ready to move there, I'll share those details with you on Thursday, once the guidance has been fully written up and we can clearly communicate that to the public and to businesses. This will provide clarity and certainty and give people time to prepare. Please note though, as with our previous process, no decision has been made on moving out of alert Level 3 at this stage, as we've done previously you will receive clear guidance and clear signaling before any such move. In the meantime, the government is well advanced in our plans to get New Zealand moving and grow in the wake of COVID-19. Central to those plans in the budget and team is the budget in 10 days time. Our hard and early health response to fight COVID-19 has opened up economic opportunities. Now as we get the economy moving again, we look to both domestic and international opportunities to make the most of the head start New Zealand has with its recovery. But I need to warn you, the budget will continue the government's careful and balanced approach to running the books. With decreased revenue and the government taking on extra debt, we are being very careful to ensure that every dollar spent helps create jobs and sets us on a path to our country rebuilding better. Finance Minister will have more to say on this in his pre-budget speech this Thursday. One key aspect of our plan to get New Zealand moving is the work on the Trans Tasman Bubble. Today I can confirm that I've accepted Prime Minister Morrison's invitation to participate via video link in the Australian National Cabinet meeting scheduled for tomorrow. The meeting will discuss a range of matters in relation to the COVID response and both sides of the Tasman, including the creation of a trans tasman treble bubble. I will update media on the meeting tomorrow, in fact just after the meeting. But it is fair to say such a meeting is without precedent and highlights both what's happened with the cooperation at a state level and Australia, and then also the mutual importance of our two countries and economies to each other. Both our countries strong, wrinkled on fighting the virus has placed us in the enviable position of being able to plan the next stage in our economic rebuild, and to include trans tasman, treble and engagement in our strategy. Onto segment, loosely called Kiwi ingenuity. I know that the biggest agricultural event in the southern hemisphere and national field days is still hoping to go ahead later this year, and this is an incredibly welcome plan that they maintain considering the economic shot in the arm it gives our rural services sector. More than half a billion dollars in sales last year, and the flow on that has for our regional communities, 183 million for the

Waikato alone. But like many of events across the country, the planning to host these again only when it's safe to do so, and so that work continues. But in the meantime, that mid-June gap in the calendar will be filled with field days online, a virtual event. I know the Field Day Society has been working on for some time, and one that can bring hundreds of exhibitors together helping connect New Zealand and international companies at a time when our borders are closed. The world wants our quality food and fiber, and perhaps now more than ever, our high-quality ideas as well. OK, I'm happy to take your questions.

### **Speech 32: May 5 (JA32)**

Thank you very much, Doctor Bloomfield. Can I reiterate your thanks to those who are our midwives and our communities and it is in times like this that we acknowledge the role that they play for many mums to be within the community and within their *forno*. And they always go above and beyond or just want to acknowledge that. And also of course world hand washing day as well. Achieving 0 cases two days in a row is the result of New Zealanders demonstrating a level of commitment and discipline to our goal of winning the fight against COVID-19 that we can all be undeniably proud of. Points to our lockdown. Doing exactly what we've planned it to do. Break the chain of transmission. However, we know the virus can have a long tail and the other cases can pop up.

So, as we make our way through this week and head towards the Level 3 review next week, my message remains. Don't do anything that snatches our potential victory at this point. One case at one gathering has led to multiple clusters and the virus getting away on us can still happen. So, my message remains the same for the remainder of the week. Stay home, stay in your bubble, maintain physical distancing and let's double down this week to maintain this good run of numbers. I'm also mindful that I have seen positive numbers in other places before and it's not always sustained, so we do need to still be cautious.

Before I come to Australia, I want to give you a quick update on the progress of the support and assistance for businesses and their workers hit by COVID-19. This afternoon, the COVID-19 response to the management measures legislation bill will have its first reading in Parliament. It gives a fit to a range of measures the government has put in place to support businesses through the pandemic, including helping businesses facing insolvency to remain viable by hibernating existing debt until they can trade normally again. Changes to the parental leave scheme to allow essential workers to return to work without being disadvantaged by losing entitlements to a certain leave and payments. And changes that will allow the likes of the Heart Foundation and Coast Guard, and particularly Countdown kids Charitable Trusts, to process their fundraising lotteries through email, phone, and electronic payments. These are just some of these innovative consequences of this extraordinary time we're in, and the resolution that we're finding for those problems. First reading of the bill will take place this afternoon and will be referred to the Epidemic Response Committee for consideration and reported back to the House on Tuesday, 12 May. It will then move through the remaining legislative stages as quickly as possible.

I've just come from a meeting of the Australian National cabinet, a gathering of Australia state and federal leaders to discuss our experience with COVID-19 on both sides of the ditch. What we can learn from one another and how we might be able to work together as we recover from this pandemic. The national cabinet tends to meet in times of national crisis, but obviously is infrequent. The last New Zealand Prime Minister participating in such a meeting was Peter Fraser, who attended various meetings with Australia's war cabinet. Australians and New Zealanders travel across the ditch more than they do anywhere else. New Zealand is Australia's second largest source of tourists after China with 1.2 million visitors last year and 1.6 million Aussies visited us, so we both stand to benefit from getting travel up and running again. Part of the reason for so much trouble is that families and friendships of course span the Tasman, around 75,000 Australians and New Zealand are more than half a million Kiwis in Australia. We're also Australia's largest export market by number of exporting firms, 18 and a half thousand Aussie businesses trade with New Zealand, meaning we're especially critical for Australian SMEs. So the case for increasing economic relations when safe is clear. I joined the meeting at the very very beginning and I should note it is still under way and so you'll forgive me for not saying too much here at this point, but it is our intention to issue a statement at the conclusion of the national cabinet in order to provide you with an update of some of the issues discussed and some of the potential outcomes of that meeting. But again, I would note such a discussion has only been possible as a result of the world leading results on both sides of the Tasman to get the virus under control. And I do think that we should

both be proud of the efforts that had been made and also the, again, the demonstration of the important ANZAC bond between us.

Onto a bit of Kiwi ingenuity, I've outlined a few innovations to date that are helping to get our economy moving. I wanna reflect on one of those in particular and that is our vital supply chain, our transport sector. New ways of working have ensured our food, food and goods have been unpacked from ships and aircraft loaded into trucks and delivered to retailers as well as kicked our exports flowing. At Wellington Centre point the teams eliminated face to face contact and physical paperwork and other adopted digital kiosks, radio comms, automated weighbridges and virtual planning meetings. We've seen that same kind of adaptability and businesses up and down the country. Just one example is how two particular drivers Greg and Sam have willingly changed their hours of work and routines to match the different Inter Islander ferry timetables so they can continue to get frozen vegetables and chips from Ashburton to the Fairies and Picton. I want to say thanks to Greg and Sam, necessity breeds innovation and with social distancing and good hygiene likely of course to be with us. For a long time to come, I wouldn't be surprised if we keep seeing innovation throughout our alert levels and across the country. Happy to take your questions.

### **Speech 33: May 6 (JA33)**

Good afternoon. I want to talk today about some of the work taking place in New Zealand's economy to get us moving again and how we can leverage our strong health response to COVID to create some economic advantage for New Zealand going forward. But first I'll hand over to Doctor Bloomfield for his health update.

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Some of you will be aware of the news announced by Microsoft this morning that it is set to make a significant investment to establish a data center region in New Zealand for its cloud services. I do note that this is subject to normal regulatory approvals. However, this is a hugely welcome development, not least for job opportunities in the near term, for our construction industry in the longer term, for our ICT industry and local innovators, but because it serves as a signal to the world that New Zealand is open for business and quality investment. Our decision to go hard and go early on the health front for COVID-19 has been our best economic response. Now it's about positioning New Zealand to recover and building on investment opportunities such as this one. More broadly, it is my view that by tackling the virus we have positioned our economy to be able to rebuild ahead of many others globally. That is our safe haven strategic advantage. International companies like Microsoft wouldn't be investing here or looking to invest here if they didn't have full confidence in the New Zealand economy that we are ready to welcome quality investment and offer a safe place for operation and both our health and business since. Today's announcement also represents a vote of confidence in New Zealand's digital future. It means the government and New Zealand businesses and New Zealanders will be able to access the scale and security of cloud services offered by a major global provider in a way that hasn't been done before here in New Zealand.

I have two other pieces of economic news that I would just like to note as well. Trade Minister David Parker has announced that the 21 APIC economies have committed to working together to ensure trade and investment continues to flow to help counter the economic impact of COVID-19. This will promote a more stable trading environment for our food exporters and will also help provide reliable access to medical supplies. To quote the minister, in these troubled times, our region has recognized how important it is to act in concert to keep supply chains open and trade flowing, especially in essential goods and services. And employment figures released this morning by Statistics New Zealand, while covering the period before the worst of the COVID-19 impact, showed the economy's underlying strength heading into this global pandemic. In the three months to the end of March, the number of employed people rose by 19,000 or the number of unemployed was up by 5000. The employment rate rose to 67.5% or the unemployment rate also rise slightly from 4 to 4.2%, remaining near its lowest levels in a decade. Obviously, a huge amount has changed in the last six weeks in New Zealand, and this global one-in-100 year health and economic crisis will contribute to unemployment rising, of that there is no doubt, but we will continue to support people to help protect jobs, to help grow jobs and help support people's incomes.

Fittingly, our Kiwi ingenuity story for today is a business story from the West Coast of South Island where people are working together to make sure that they are supporting one another. I recently had a letter from development west coast to let me know that a coordinated effort has brought together an online directory of 180 local businesses that are operating under Level 3. There's also help for small and medium businesses in the form of a rebate of \$5 per delivery, up to a maximum rent of \$250 per establishment to how far offset some of the costs associated with running a delivery service or using a carrier service. [Www.nowopen.co.nz](http://www.nowopen.co.nz). It's a great initiative and a platform built in collaboration with Epic Resport, a PGF funded digital hub, and I say well done to them. We're ready for questions.

### **Speech 34: May 6 (JA34)**

Thank you, Doctor Bloomfield. Six weeks now our lives have been quite different. We've gone from a lockdown into Level 3 and the reopening of parts of our economy as our team of 5,000,000 has stuck to our strategy of going hard and going early to win the battle against COVID-19. We can be proud of what we have achieved. Low numbers of new cases and two days where we were without any. Increases in testing, including actively testing those who might be at risk of COVID-19 as we hunt to find any burning embers of the virus. Amongst the health response, we've seen the ingenuity of Kiwis who have understood what was needed to operate at Level 3 safely and have made it work. Even more pleasing is how well these owners and operators have been supported with Kiwis being mindful of the people and livelihoods that sit behind a meal, a parcel, a takeaway lunch. Those businesses reopened their doors and we have begun reopening our economy.

Now we find ourselves in a unique position again. On Monday, Cabinet will consider the next stage of our response. We will do that with the best evidence and advice we can with all of the data we have from almost one more full cycle of the virus. We need every number from every single day to get the full set of data and we need of course the view of the Director General of Health. We will make a balanced decision. One that recognizes the impact of restrictions and the huge impact of restrictions on people's livelihoods but doesn't risk all of the gains that we have made today. After all, no one wants a second wave. No one. As restrictions have been relaxed in other countries around the world, the virus has had the opportunity to bounce back. And in some places, it has. Ultimately, we need to stay in control. So the key for us has always been to understand where we are at any given time in our battle with COVID and then make sure we're at the right alert level to put us in the best position to continue beating it. Every alert level therefore has its own battle, and even when you win one, it doesn't mean that the war is over.

So, a quick reminder again of the framework we've been using to help us on this journey. As the alert level system makes clear, different levels allow different amounts of contact with one another, depending on how bad the spread of COVID-19 is. At alert level 4, the aim is to eliminate contact with each other and that is what a full lockdown achieves. At Level 3 restrict there is still a high risk the virus can get out of control and bounce back, so the goal remains to restrict contact with one another as much as possible. At level 2, the aim is still to reduce close contact with strangers that acknowledges that the virus is probably still with us, so we do need to behave differently to prevent it taking off again. It is very unlikely that we have hunted down every single case of COVID-19. If stray cases start new chains of transmission, we might not find them for a month, so we all have to stay on guard. Level 2 has been designed to get as many people back to work as possible, and the economy back up and running, but in the safest way possible. In a nutshell, the principle behind level 2 is play it safe. We will only move there if things are under control, but it won't mean the fight is over. If we adopt a safer way of operating as part of our new normal, we can keep it in cheque and remain on our path of elimination.

So, now for the principles of playing it safe. First, we have our constants. Public health measures remain unchanged. If you are even slightly sick, stay home. I know this is against New Zealanders' stoic intuition, but I cannot reiterate this enough. If you are sick, please stay at home. If you have symptoms, even if it is just a runny nose, a sore throat, get a test and now more than ever, wash your hands often and properly all of the time, wash all high touch surfaces regularly like your keys and door handles and don't pass other people your phone. The border remains unchanged. We'll continue to keep our borders closed except to Kiwis. We will continue to isolate Kiwis who come in from overseas and managed hotels away from others, and our elimination strategy remains in place. Test. Contact trace. Isolate. This is our COVID business as usual. There are a few other things we want you to keep the same, and that includes your distance. You'll hear people talk a lot about how far you should stay apart from others. Let me give

you the rationale behind that. If you are sick, then you'll sometimes have symptoms that will make you spread that your illness. Things like coughing. If that's the case, the safest place for you is at home, but if someone doesn't follow those rules or doesn't know they are sick and leaves the house the safest distance between you and that sick person is 2 meters. So that's why we use that guideline.

Now, as we've moved through the alert levels, you'll be coming into contact with more people and more places. It's not always easy to keep that much distance between you, so at alert Level 2 playing it safe means keeping two meters from strangers, but in your workplace or places where you're around people you know or who we can contact trace later, we can live with less because we can find you and we can find them. So let's then talk about workplaces at level 2. Businesses can restart for staff and the customers. Services can be provided on customers premises, for example, in people's homes and people who haven't been into the office spaces can return, but with good hygiene practices in place. But one thing to remember, COVID is still with us. The fewer people we can have contact trace in a workplace if we need to, the better. So while you can go back, it is still worth the conversation with your boss whether you have to be there in person. After all, many businesses may well have experienced the productivity gains of staggered start times, less congestion and working from home. There's no reason we should lose what we have learned. Each business can work out its own situation. There is flexibility there. What is non-negotiable, though, are those basic hygiene practices. That brings me to those places of work where working from home was never an option. Domestic cleaners, hairdressers, retail stores, cafes, restaurants, hospitality. At level 2 when we get there, these operations can reopen. But they all must play it safe, and that means doing things differently. For retail, that means physical distancing in store for both staff and customers. It means good hygiene practices and regular cleaning of surfaces and those things people touch often. Larger retailers and malls will follow the lead of our supermarket with measures like limiting the number of people in store to enable enough space for physical distancing. For hairdressers and beauticians, it means wearing appropriate PPE because of the close proximity you have with your customers throughout the day, because we want to protect you and your clients. This is an area where we have given specific advice because it is virtually impossible to do this job without being in very close proximity to your clients and to having a large number of clients in any single day. So this is to mitigate that risk. And for hospitality, be it a café, a restaurant, or a bar. Playing it safe means using all of the evidence and advice we have to make rules that work. This means that only those businesses that can apply the three Ss will be able to operate. They are, firstly, people must be seated. That means you can only have as many people in your venue as you can safely seat, and no one, regardless of venue size, can have more than 100. The reason for this is simple: COVID loves congregations. Crowds of strangers with no physical distancing and no ability to tell who you were standing near is very very difficult. It is much easier to separate people keeping them physically distanced and trace them if we make sure people are seated. It also helps to prevent the spread. Congested bars have already produced a massive cluster in New Zealand, and we must avoid another. The second S, people must be separated, so there must be social distance in venue between people and tables. Acknowledge this may mean for some it is not economical to open, but that is up to each venue. 3: each table must have a single server. At every venue, there must be table service, not people going up to counters, as this minimizes contact and helps us to trace if we need to. So, the three Ss again are seated, separated, and single server. Finally, as you can imagine, contact tracing will also be key here. We are working on a nationwide technological fix to make it easier for businesses to record who comes into their premises. This is likely to include QR codes, but in the meantime, manual or basic digital recording will be used, which was being done by venues before we moved up the alert levels. Of course it matters what happens outside the hospitality being used too, as we have seen in recent weeks, operators will have a responsibility to manage customer contact outside their venue. If there are lines for instance, people must be separated. Those who do not comply with these guidelines will be shut down and lose their ability to operate. As you can see, there are significant risks in hospitality and so there are significant rules to manage those risks. These are all principles we have worked through with the hospitality association, including the three Ss. We both believe they can be made to work. That brings me to the issue of gatherings.

Our journey in understanding this virus has also led us to reaffirm that at level 2, indoor gatherings are limited to a maximum of 100. Do want to just acknowledge that that is a maximum. Of course many venues for their fire regulations will not be able to have that many and many will not be able to physically seat that many. But we have also learned a lot through this journey, and that means we will also limit outdoor gatherings to 100 people also. Previously, you'll recall it was 500 for outdoors, but I think everyone can see that big events lead to risk, and that



risk can mean big clusters. I know this will affect many, but we have to keep working on getting things right so that we can get to a place where larger events are possible again. In the meantime, we are thinking about the extra support required for sectors that will be on an ongoing basis affected by these limitations. For managed events like weddings, music events, religious services, funerals, these can be held at level 2 when we get there, but with all the same public health guidance and with the 100 person limit. Public venues such as museums and markets can also open again, but again the same rules of keeping your distance and good hygiene applied. Success or failure could depend on something as simple as how often you clean the handrails.

Finally, it's, well, not finally, but this brings me to the issue of bubbles. Firstly, you no longer need to stick to your bubble. You can begin seeing family and friends again. But we do not, we do want you to hang on to the same principles that we are using generally in hospitality, issues around space and hygiene and contact tracing. If we have large scale events held in people's home, then all of that becomes harder. That is why at alert level 2 we are saying that you can have friends and family over to your home, but keep the numbers small so that you can practice all of those measures that we're outlining across alert level 2. This is not the time for a large party or function at your home. We will be providing more specific guidance on this in the coming days.

And I want to come to the issue of moving around New Zealand. At the time of creating the elite level framework, our case numbers were limited. We now know a lot about risk. We know for instance, that so long as you play it safe when you travel, we can minimize the risk. It's what you do when you get there. That is the problem. A trip from Wellington to Napier to see your mum is fine. A trip from Wellington to Napier to go to a big conference with an open bar is not fine. That's why at level two we will be allowing people to move around the country again, but to do it safely, keep your distance on public transport and at airports, manage your social distancing. Remember the same practices apply wherever you go in the country, and those are practices that already those involved in large scale transport are putting in place. I know this change will mean a lot to the likes of our tourism industry, and I know a lot of people are keen to support you. In fact, I got an email just last night from a wonderful Kiwi named Judith who told me that quote "when we are on the other side of this, I plan to get a haircut, then to take a trip somewhere in New Zealand". A lot of Kiwis share the sentiment, but we need to support our tourism industry safely to avoid us going back to square one. It brings me to recreation and sport. It's quite different at level 2. At level 2, playgrounds, gyms, pools and public courts are permitted to reopen, subject to meeting the required public health measures or water activities can resume. Some community sports will be able to return to play more quickly than others, while the necessary health requirements are worked through. So we ask that you give your club a chance to get up and running again and to work through some of those issues. We all want to get back to sport, but we want to take enough time to do it safely and to look after those who are involved in it. Professional sport will be able to resume domestically under level 2 with the necessary public health measures in place. Super Rugby and the Netball Premiership League have already confirmed their intention to resume a domestic competition at alert Level 2, which I know will be cause for great excitement for many. The rules around mass gatherings will still apply, so there won't be any stadium crowds for now, but sport will be played. Again, there is more detail to come on this area and that will be made publicly available.

And last but not least, education. Early learning services, schools and tertiary education facilities can open at level 2. I do want to emphasize that with so few cases in New Zealand schools and early learning services are safe environments for children, young people and staff, additional public health control measures are in place to prevent the spread of the disease and to support contact tracing. Schools and early learning services will engage with parents about children returning at Level 2. Distance learning is available for those unable to attend school, for example, those who are self-isolating because of potential contact with covid. Tertiary education facilities, too, will maintain the core capability to deliver comprehensive distance learning to students if needed. If an education facility has a confirmed or probable case of COVID-19 in the future, they must close on an individual group basis for 72 hours to allow contact tracing and then potentially for a further 14 days if that is required. We also agreed that when we make the decision to move levels, schools won't be opening midweek. Whenever the decision is made, they will be open at the beginning of the following week. The same public health messages continue to apply to schools. Keep children at home if they're even slightly sick. A good hygiene such as hand washing are very important. Where possible, physical distancing is a good precaution. We do however know it is near impossible in an early learning environment and very challenging in schools. So staying home if sick, good hygiene practices and regular cleaning become even more important here. And all schools in early learning services will collect information about who's

there, so public health can contact people quickly if needed. We know parents have lots of questions, but please give schools and early learning centers time to plan and contact you. And again just a reminder, we're not moving there yet. This is just the framework. I hope that gives you a good sense of the rationale and principles of level 2, the place where we are still limiting contact with strangers and where we must play it safe. As you can see, it is a large step from where we are now. So my last message today is a very important one. When it comes to time to move, we want to move with confidence. That means the Ministry of Health and Experts giving us the best advice on how to do that. If that advice is to move in a phased way because level 2 taken all at once has too many risks, because for instance it includes gatherings of people, I would rather take that advice and move out slowly than be in Level 3 longer than we need to.

Equally, no one wants to make a decision that leads to us yooying between levels. Now again, no decisions have been made yet. The director general has not provided us with advice yet on what decision we should take on Monday. We wait for all of the data before we do that. But if reducing risks means taking several steps into level 2 rather than one big one, that may be what happens, but we all need to wait and make that call when the time comes. And finally, a reminder to stick to the plan. I know it's Mother's Day this weekend and the urge to reach out will be strong, but we remain at Level 3, and so if your mum is not in your bubble, then reach out over the phone or video, send away local presents and make plans to catch up when it's safe to do so. There will no doubt be additional questions beyond the broad overview I've given today and details are available at the COVID website, including examples for different workplaces. We've tried to provide as much as we can, and we've tried to work alongside industry and industry associations to develop guidance, but doesn't mean necessarily will have every answer. We've given ourselves time though. So if you're a business in particular, you need a question answered please do reach out to MB for further information. Ultimately, level 2 is our safer normal, not a return to business as usual. Data modelling did tell us we're better off in the longer term to move down through the alerts progressively, so it does mean getting every stage right. That means both the decision to go there, but also what we do when we get there. We think of ourselves as halfway down Everest. I think it's clear that no one wants to hike back up that peak. The descent is known to be even more dangerous, and so we need to proceed with caution, with the highest degree of confidence and to look after one another on the way. And I absolutely believe we can do that. We're now happy to your questions.

### **Speech 35: May 11 (JA35)**

Good afternoon, everyone. I want to start today by acknowledging the sacrifices New Zealanders have made over the 6 and a half weeks we have been in alert levels four and three in order to beat COVID-19, be it those who lost loved ones and were unable to say goodbye and mourn properly, be it the children who wrote to me about missing birthdays and there were many of them, or the many who cancelled weddings or didn't mark anniversaries, be it the jobs that are being lost and the businesses that owners spent years building up only to watch it and their workforce suffered terribly. But for all of that, Kiwis from all walks of life were resolute and determined. Determined that this was a war that we could eventually win. But only if we acted together. So we formed a team and as a team we created a wall of protection for one another.

Part of the weekend I read a letter from a mother who spoke about what that team effort has meant to her. Her young son has compromised immunity and as a result is on constant medication. When COVID arrived in the form of a global pandemic, she was terrified, but she was writing to me out of sheer relief. There may be no cure, no vaccine for COVID yet, but there was each and every one of you, every single Kiwi who made the decision to stay home, to make sacrifices. And you did that for her boy. You did something for someone's mother. For someone's father, someone's child. You created a wall. That means the virus couldn't reach those that it could easily take, and for that there are many people who are grateful to you, their team of 5,000,000. Case numbers remain low. And in the last week we have had two days in a row of no cases. By the end of Level 4, our R value, the number of people each case goes on to inflict was zero point 4 and at Level 3 it has remained low. Experts tell us that if the R value stays below one, we will eventually achieve our goal of elimination.

As of today, we have only 19 New Zealanders recorded as having the virus of whom only two are in hospital. None that it has been through luck, but rather through hard work. While we've been battling this virus, we've also built up

our health system to specifically act as a defense. We can now undertake up to 12,000 tests a day. 3.5% of the entire population has been tested and our testing rates are amongst the highest in the world per capita, ahead of countries like Australia, the UK, Germany, Singapore and South Korea. A lot of work has gone into building up our contact tracing capability. Dr. Aisha Viral's report has been instrumental in this regard and the majority of the recommendations had been implemented. We can now contact trace 185 cases a day and have capacity to contact 10,000 people a day through a new national call center established since the beginning of the outbreak. Identifying new cases of the virus quickly through testing and rapid contact tracing can be 90% as effective as a vaccine in stopping the spread of the virus. But I cannot emphasize enough that speed is of the essence. The clock starts as soon as someone feels sick. If you have COVID, we need every minute to find the people you have been in contact with and isolate them before they are in contact with someone else. In short, if you get a sniffle or a sore throat or a cough, get advice and get a test quickly. Please don't be a stoic Kiwi. If you do your bit, we all must keep doing ours.

That means continuing our strong border controls. Hand hygiene in physical distancing which have and will continue to be our primary wall of defense against hope COVID. There are tools that have worked. But we all know there is more to do. We may have won a few battles, but we have not won the war. We are still recording cases most days. New information about the virus indicates it could be spread prior to a person becoming symptomatic, meaning it can be passed on by seemingly healthy people. The scientists who have advised us so well today say there is still a chance of silent spread in the future and therefore cases taking off again.

So today I am announcing that Cabinet agrees we are ready to move into level 2. To open up the economy, but to do it as safely as possible. So let me sit out how we will do that. On Thursday this week, retail malls, cafes, restaurants, cinemas and other public spaces, including playgrounds and gyms, can reopen. All will be required to have physical distancing and strict hygiene measures in place. You can begin to move around New Zealand, but space yourself out, especially if you're using public transport. And of course health services will restart. On Monday, 18 May, all children and young people will be able to return to school and early learning. The staging is to give parents, teachers and education facilities time to plan. And finally, on Thursday, 21 May, bars will be able to open with all the requirements set out last week, including that seating must be provided, there must be space between tables and there mustn't be multiple waiters and waitresses serving a single table. We have left bars to last because they do pose the most risk, as we can see from South Korea that recently opened up their bars only to close them again after one person created an outbreak of 40 people and caused 1500 tests. While we have put in place measures and expectations to make all hospitality as safe as possible, these few extra days really do give us a chance to lock in the data from Level 3 and feel more secure that we're ready for this move. Overall, though, the upshot is that in 10 days time we will have reopened most businesses in New Zealand and sooner than many other countries around the world. But that fits with our plan, and our plan was go hard, go early, so we can get our economy moving again sooner, and so we can get the economic benefit of getting our health response right. And so far we have.

But there does have to be a new normal, and that normal means that we will be breaking out of our bubbles. We will be around more people, but we can do that and get more activity going if we balance that we keeping our distance and keeping our social gatherings small for now. A strength so far has been our willingness to learn about this virus and change the way that we behave to lead it. And we've learned a lot, especially from our clusters. If you follow the origin, you'll know that there are a slice of Kiwi life they have started at wedding receptions, stag dos, a conference in Queenstown that included drinks and socializing, a bar and meta matter. There is a theme. When we come together to socialize in large numbers with one another, there is risk. The best insurance policy we have for that risk is to reduce the size of our socializing for now and that is what the Director General of Health has recommended that we do for now.

Parties. Big social events or anything designed to be for mixing and mingling won't be allowed to happen for groups that are larger than 10. Gatherings at home need to be kept at 10, church and religious events, weddings, funerals, stag dos all limited to 10 for now, and if you're wanting to head to a restaurant or a bar, they won't be able to take group bookings for larger than 10. This, alongside social distancing, is our insurance policy. And why 10? Simple. If something goes wrong with a group of 10 that is much easier to contain, much easier to contact trace, much less likely that if something goes wrong the whole country will have to experience more restrictions. That doesn't mean that you won't see larger gatherings of people around you. People, for instance, will be at the movies, but they'll all

be spaced out. They'll be watching sports, but they will be spaced out. People might go to a show, but they will be spaced out. You'll see bars and restaurants open, but they again will be required to have people seated and spaced out.

We have done what we can to prioritize opening up businesses, but just alter the way that we work within them for the next wee while. This strikes a balance between getting the economy moving, but also making sure we have got the next stage right. I know that many New Zealanders are looking forward to catching up with friends and family, and from this Thursday you can. But for now, as I've said, it just needs to be small. This is a transition out of our bubbles where you can see people you haven't seen in a while. You just can't do it all at once. I should add though a particular note because I have been asked this a few times. If you have a family that is larger than 10, we're not suggesting you throw anyone out of the house. We are being pragmatic; we just don't want you to have a large gathering yet. This is also one of the reasons that we have decided to allow travel again, as we signaled last week. Because it isn't so much the movement around the country that is an issue. It's actually what people do when they get there that matters. So go and see your mum. Just don't turn it into a massive family reunion while you're at it. Instead, maybe see your mum, visit a local tourism site or support a local business.

I do want to acknowledge we will be looking at these restrictions, these remaining restrictions again in just two weeks' time and if our numbers continue to look good, the number of people you can socialize with and hold events with will grow and I do want to signal that if our numbers are still looking good, we will begin to grow those numbers. Last Thursday when announcing what Level 2 looks like, I said the key rule is to play it safe that we all need to take individual responsibility for our actions and continue to behave like the virus is still amongst us, especially when in public and around people that you don't know. At levels 4 and Level 3, we had success because staying home we broke the chain of transmission. We simply weren't in contact with one another to spread the virus. At level two we are now out and about again. Just about all parts of the economy are opening up again. What we have balanced in these decisions is how we can do that. Get those restaurants, open malls, open shops, but how we can keep them open? That's why we're asking you all to be incredibly careful as we get back to a new, safer normal. None of us can assume COVID isn't with us. So with that in mind, the reminder of the golden rules of Level 2, keep your distance from other people when you're out in public, including on transport. If you're sick, stay home, don't go to work or school, don't socialize, there should be a really low bar. If you have symptoms of cold or flu, call your doctor or health line immediately and get tested. Wash your hands. Wash your hands, wash your hands, and do it properly. Don't get together socially or mix and mingle with more than 10 people at once and keep a track of where you've been and who you've seen. Your efforts, New Zealand, have got us to this place, ahead of most of the world and without the carnage that COVID has inflicted in many other places. But there are risks ahead, so please be vigilant at level 2. Irresponsible behavior will take us backwards. Getting to this position early has saved jobs and businesses, but there is a long road ahead to full recovery. And things will continue to be very, very tough before they get better. We are looking to provide more support for the businesses most affected, and to do that soon. This week the government will release our budget, our plan to respond to the economic toll the virus has caused. It will be, however, one of many steps that we take in our efforts to rebuild together. In fact, that is why the budget is called rebuilding together and it's hard as a simple idea that our team of 5,000,000 has united to beat the virus and must keep doing so. And now together we can also unite to rebuild our economy. And that there is an opportunity to build back even better addressing issues like inequality or run-down infrastructure and challenges to our environment. The finance minister will much much more to say on that on Thursday. So for now. We are in Level 3 for just two more days. From Thursday when you wake up, play it safe. Remember that wall of defense we built together as a team now rests with every one of us. So when you're out and about, acknowledge your fellow team mates. Enjoy being out more and seeing others. Keep it small. Keep your distance and be kind. We are both happy to take questions.

### **Speech 36: May 12 (JA36)**

Can I just reiterate the comments made by Doctor Bloomfield about our nurses and I have to say even before COVID-19, I received quite a few letters where people who have been through our public health system really want to acknowledge the workforce within our system and I often will get a message saying how kind, how professional, how supportive our nursing workforce and our clinical workforce are within our public health system. I don't know

if you get a chance to pass on that fitbit, but today seems like the day to do it. Can I also acknowledge that we have a huge nursing workforce trained in New Zealand working abroad and who are doing the hard yards through this pandemic as well. We want to acknowledge all of the Ginnies all around the world.

Earlier today, the government announced the biggest ever increase in funding for district health boards, as well as additional funding to support DHBs to deliver more services, more surgeries, more procedures, radiology scans and specialist appointments to help clear the COVID-19 backlog. We're investing over \$4 billion more into our health system because the lesson from covid is that we need to be prepared and that a strong health response is the best way to protect jobs. And of course, ultimately, being a position to get out of economy moving again as well. You never know when the next virus or health emergency is going to come, but when it arrives, we know that it pays to have a world class health system in place to deal with it. In fact, that is a commitment we should be making all the time to New Zealanders. When we were elected, we didn't hear it, a health system that did have a number of long-term challenges, not the least of which were some years of underfunding and public health care experience it acutely but also issues with infrastructure and facilities. Over our two previous budgets, we've made a number of investments in health and health capital, and as part of rebuilding together our budget steps the investment up even further. Alongside our announcement of increased funding for Pharmec on Sunday, it is clear that our rebuilding together budget will also ensure that our health systems is resourced to get us through and give even more care and support to NZs.

The strength of our health response means also that we were able to get to level 2 and our economy into a phase where it's opening up again even quicker. Central to this is helping our small businesses get up and on their feet and supporting them as they look to operate from Thursday for many. To assist with her recovery, the first tax refunds in our \$3 billion tax package have been paid with cash flowing into the hands of businesses. To date, 676 businesses have applied to refunds and payments with more than 62 million. This package announced last month, is the largest support package to business via the tech system in modern history.

Today I can also confirm that the small business cash flow loan scheme is officially open. In just a couple of weeks, IID officials built a new system to process applications for loans that will be interest free if repaid in the first year. These will be a source of working capital for businesses, helping with things like fixed costs like rent. The scheme went live last night and is able to receive applications from today. Payments will be made within 5 days of a loan being approved. So, whether you're a sole trader wanting to borrow for instance up to 11800 dollars interest free, or you employ 50FT staff and want to borrow up to 100,000 interest free, go online to the Inland Revenue site and you'll find all details here. And finally, our wage subsidy scheme has now paid out 2.7 billion to 1.75 million New Zealanders. It ultimately is what it is taken to make sure that we keep those people with deployed to their place of work and so they can get ready when their businesses open back up.

Finally on public transport, with more people returning to work under Level 2, I just wanna make a bit of comment on public transport and people getting to and from work. You remember when we talked about the alert level 2 framework I really encouraged workers to have conversations with their employers around whether or not the opportunity with your employer or whether they'll be coming into their place in the group. And I really want to encourage those conversations to be held to discuss whether or not there are options around flexible starting and flexible finishing times, to space out necessary commutes. I mentioned some workforces will be looking to lock in the productivity gains that were made while people were working from home, and that's one way that they can do that. I know there's some good guidance that will be issued, but in summary, plan your trip. Keep your distance and that will be required on public transport and of course track your journey as well.

And as always if you are sick stay at home, I would encourage patients across the board, though, particularly in those first few days of Level 2 as we have with every level it will probably take a period of adjustment, particularly as people work out the best time to travel on routes that allow distancing. Okay, I've seen a bit of commentary overnight and this morning from businesses and people about how they're preparing for the next stage of life and not sum up what I've seen, basically with Kiwi businesses and Kiwis just getting on with it. Cadrona ski field for an example is getting ready for when skiers hit the slopes in late June and working with the government on standards to set up zones around areas where groups may come together like near cheer lifts, planning for a domestic market and ensuring that they've got really strong contact tracing and place. A Wellington hairdresser is doubly pleased she

can reopen on Thursday and has made it this far without needing to make any of her staff redundant because of the wage subsidy. Others have written to me about catching up with their wider families conscious about those small gatherings and keeping it small. And I have to say that something kind of looking forward to as well. Alright, we're ready to take questions.

### **Speech 37: May 13 (JA37)**

Thank you, Doctor Bloomfield. Just before I come to the budget, I do wanted to speak to some of the hardest parts of the alert level framework and these parts have been difficult through the entirety of our response to COVID-19, but are particularly pronounced at alert level 2. They are namely, funerals and Tangihanga. This morning, we've instigated calls between church leaders, Dr. Bloomfield and myself were part of a call this morning. Funeral directors and leaders to see if we can find a way to further satisfy health concerns which are legitimate, particularly given that we have seen overseas and particular research demonstrating that funerals and weddings have been part of the spread of COVID-19 in many countries. But also recognize that funerals and tangi are exceptional. They're life events that cannot be postponed. I do believe that we are well on our way to finding a solution that will meet both of these concerns, and I expect the Minister of Health will have more to say on that before the end of the day. It will still mean that there will be, of course still restrictions, but we are working hard to see if we can find ways to accommodate some of the concerns that have been raised within the capacity of the Ministry of Health to help give the reassurance that some of those issues can be managed.

Tomorrow afternoon, Budget 2020 will be delivered within the most challenging economic conditions faced by any government since the Great Depression. The global COVID-19 pandemic has triggered a global economic shock, not of our making, but like every country in the world we are also not immune to its fallout. Now let me be clear, the coming months and years will be some of the most challenging our country has faced in a very, very long time. The International Monetary Fund predicts the global economy will contract by 3% in 2020, much worse than during the global financial crisis. Around the world, unemployment will rise significantly. Businesses will fail and close, government revenue will decline. And we will feel the pain here too. New Zealand is about to enter a very tough winter, but every winter eventually is followed by spring. And if we make the right choices, we can get New Zealanders back to work and our economy moving quickly again.

Today I want to sit out the values that underpin our economic response to the virus and signal how we intend to tackle it. Firstly, though, the best economic response to the virus was always going to be a strong health response. Going hard and early means economic opportunities and faster than many trading partners. I know the last seven weeks have been a huge challenge to business, which is why the first phase in our economic response has been entirely focused on assisting business to stay afloat and supporting New Zealanders to stay connected to their jobs. I'm enormously proud of the work Finance Minister Grant Robertson and Social Development Minister Kamal Cipolloni did with the wage subsidy scheme. This nearly \$11 billion investment has ensured that over a million and a half workers have stayed employed and connected to their jobs during the toughest period of the lockdown, we're providing a guarantee to businesses to keep going as they can start to get back on their feet at level 2. Sitting alongside the wage subsidies being the largest suite of business tax changes in modern history, aimed at freeing up cash flow to support businesses when they couldn't trade. And our no interest loan scheme provides much needed cash for things like rent and other costs as they get up and running. These measures have worked so far and unemployment rate it will sadly increase. But it has not to date spiked. And treasury scenarios suggest that because we stayed at level 4 and 3 for a shorter period of time, our unemployment rate could end up at the lower end of their projected ranges. Dealing to the virus quickly also allows other economic opportunities. A possible transtasman Bubble, when safe, could see New Zealand and Australia opening up greater tourism and trade opportunities, while our borders have to stay closed so the rest of the world, offering some additional reprieve for our tourism and hospitality industries.

But the next stage in our journey of rebuilding together is recovery. Our focus now is the jobs and incomes of businesses and New Zealanders. Budget 2020 is but the first step in this phase. In normal years, the budget sets out the government's economic plans for the following year in detail, but this budget is different. It is not business as usual. Instead, it is a tailored solution to a unique situation. There is no playbook for the recovery we are about to

embark on. But nor do we need one. When it has come to COVID-19, we have carved a path based on our people, our health system, and our economy. And now that is exactly what we will do again as we recover and rebuild. Let me say from the outset, the team and I will bring the same determination and focus to the economic rebuild as we brought to our health response. To start that phase, we need to consider what our objectives are and the best steps to achieve them. The finance minister will sit out much of this tomorrow and I won't preempt anything he has to say on that. But today I can sit out what we are trying to achieve and the values that we bring to the work. The first thing you'll notice is that we believe when times are hard you don't cut. You invest. We will run the ruler over every line of expenditure. No question, we need to ensure that our expenditure provides value for money and supports our primary goal of jobs. But the notion that at this time of need we would make cuts to the essential services so many New Zealanders need more than ever is not only immoral, it's economically wrong. That's why yesterday we made the biggest investment in health funding in two decades. It's why on Monday we delivered pay equity for early childhood teachers. It's why one of the first things we did when the virus hit was to increase benefits to ensure those who lost their job and more to help them through. Now more than ever, we need our schools and hospitals, our public houses and roads and railways. We need our police and our nurses, and we need our wealthiest safety net. We will not let our team of 5,000,000 fall when the times get tough. Instead, we will strengthen the blanket of support that government is here to provide. We are rebuilding together, not apart. These foundations are essential. They are our base, but on top of them we must build the things that accelerate employment, empower businesses, and stimulate our productive economy. Our relentless focus on jobs, economy, and businesses is what's required now for the wellbeing of New Zealanders. Projections suggest our economic shock could be sharp, but hopefully short. That means we need a plan to get us through the worst and position us well for recovery. The biggest fiscal asset we currently have to get us through the worst is the government's balance sheet. Due to our prudent economic management of the books hitting into lockdown, we had it under 20% of GDP, lower than what we inherited it at, lower unemployment around 4% and a AAA foreign currency rating from Moodys. I defended the surplus as we ran in our first 2 budgets on the basis that we needed to prepare financially for a rainy day. Well that day has well and truly arrived. The government's ability to borrow at very low interest rates places us in a strong position to weather the economic storm ahead. But more than that, we are well positioned to use our balance sheet to shelter to New Zealanders from the worst impacts of the fallout, and in doing so, protect jobs and grow our economy. Our number one priority is jobs and that's why this will be a jobs budget. That means doing all we can to support people staying in their current job or moving to a new one if needed, and the reason for that is simple. It harks back to the sentiment of Norman Cook that all anyone ever really needs is something to do, somewhere to live, someone to love, and something to hope for. Employment helps form a foundation. It supports families and pays the bills that helps provide self-value and worth and when times are tough like this, workplaces can provide an important support network. Our plan is to invest. By investing we will create jobs and get the economy moving again. Just as the rising tide lifts, all boats of growing economy has the ability to support us at all and allows us to bring the government books back into the black. Now this is not going to be the work of just one budget. It will require relentless focus on growth and jobs and not just growth for growth sake, but in a way that acknowledges we have challenges to our environment to our wellbeing that we can also use this time to help resolve. Tomorrow you will see how we will start to do that. But in the same way that we have fought the virus together, we also need to start our rebuild together. That will take all of us. In the coming month the government will launch a comprehensive engagement program that will pose a simple proposition. Look at what our team of 5,000,000 achieved together in beating the virus. Now what can we do together to get our economy moving again? To look after our people and rebuild in a way that makes things better than they were before? That will of course include the business community, but it will be broader too. If anything, the last few months have shown us that united we are a formidable force and we channel our energies into a goal collectively, we are stronger for it. Prior to the virus we faced serious long term challenges, persistent inequality, poverty, the threat of climate change, the need to diversify the economy, low productivity, limited domestic manufacturing, and an abundance of low paid jobs. Do we return to those settings or is now the time to find a better way? There are tough times to come, but we have experienced tough times before. And when confronted with external crisis, be it a Great Depression, a World War, or now a global health pandemic, our instinct has been to come together, as business, as community as Iwi as New Zealand. And we will again, we will use the strength of our economic position as government to carry the load while businesses and households get back on their feet. The situation is constantly changing, and the future may feel uncertain. But as I said right at the beginning, we have a plan. We know it will be tough, but we will get through it the same way we got through the past two months. Together. Happy to take your questions.

### Speech 38: May 14 (JA38)

Today is the day the Minister of Finance comes down to this House and delivers the government's plan for the next year here to affect the plan for the next 3. It is business as usual within the opposition to stand and give a speech opposing that budget, including initiatives and funding that has the potential to get our economy growing as early as next year. Business as usual would have everyone in this House retrench into their old patterns that the public know so well, but if we're all being honest, probably have very little time for. Today, Mr. Speaker, I'm afraid the leader of the opposition has assumed it's business as usual, but nothing and I mean time and our history is usual and so neither should our response be. We have been a government that with the support and efforts of New Zealanders. Took us through an enormous.

...

I say that Mr. Bridges stood, not move a motion of no confidence in this budget and I take that as an assumption that the opposition will vote for this budget today. I hope so, because this is a period in our history that is a global crisis. And to see this budget for what it is. A response to the rainy day we have planned for. Now is the time to come together as politicians. To say that a rainy day demands of us that we shelter and protect New Zealand to weather the storm. Rather than argue about who gets to hold the umbrella, I hope the opposition sticks away from business as usual and does vote for a budget that delivers jobs. Mr. Speaker, a mere six months ago, nobody would have imagined a world that is in the grips of a global COVID-19 pandemic, let alone one that would wreak havoc, havoc across health systems and the global economy. I still vividly remember at the beginning of the year reading about the first lockdowns overseas and thinking how remarkable it was to ask humans to stay in one place for such a long period of time just seemed unfathomable. And yet here we are, having shut our borders, and moved into lockdown and collectively built a wall of defense to a virus that was closing in on the world.

Mr. Speaker, there are a few things now that I think I will ever consider to be outside the bounds of possibility anymore. And perhaps that is the same perspective we now need as we start our recovery. We have to be focused. We have to be decisive. We have to go into this period knowing that it will be tough, but that there is hope and there is possibility. In short, I give my commitment to New Zealanders that they will see us, this government, apply the same unrelenting focus we have had on our health response to COVID-19 to our economic response, and that work has already started. From the very beginning we have said that jobs were our focus and they are. That is why in March we announced a wage subsidy scheme designed to keep people connected to work and to certainty and the dignity that comes with work. That programme has supported roughly 1.6 million New Zealanders to date and is meant that we have thus far avoided the spike in unemployment other countries have experienced while our country was in lockdown and our businesses were unable to open. It helped get many workers and businesses through the toughest weeks so that they now have the chance to reopen and move to recovery. But we must keep going. The times ahead... Overall, predictions are dire. Unemployment will rise and growth will slow dramatically. We know as a trading nation that will have an impact and it will be significant and it will be painful. We have never sugarcoated what the future will look like, but nor will we pretend that there is nothing we can do about it. Governments have choices, just as we did when we faced COVID-19, and those choices are between [sleeping] or setting up and taking action. We have chosen to act. Today we start by extending the wage subsidy. Now it won't be the same as the first time round. As we look to make it more targeted, we know that there are businesses who are opening up again, but we also know that there are some who cannot just yet, while others will take more time to recover. It serves no one if in the meantime or businesses are opening back up, they lay off staff unnecessarily. I know how important this is. I've received countless emails from people describing what a difference the wage subsidy has meant to them, and almost all of them, they talk about these staff being their family and how important retaining and looking after them has been. So today we are extending the wage subsidy for another eight weeks with a focus on providing support to businesses who have been particularly affected by COVID-19. This will mean businesses and sectors like tourism and other small businesses across the country will be supported and it will ease the recovery for thousands. And like the first round of the wage subsidy saved jobs, this targeted extension will save jobs too. That's why it's in such an important part of this job's budget. We believe it's the best thing we can do at this phase of our recovery to help businesses who're getting back on their feet and to support their staff. But our response must go beyond supporting those still in work. This isn't enough. Too many people have already lost their jobs and we need to support their path back to employment. For them, we must be swift. We must be practical, but we also owe it to ourselves to take this



opportunity to solve the problems of both today and the problems of yesterday as we go. If I asked you before COVID-19 what it is we must address as a nation. What are our current challenges? I imagine that many people would write a very similar list. We have long faced a housing crisis. Our environment has been suffering inequality and child poverty of all being issues that we have had to tackle. In three years time, I want to look back and say that COVID-19 was not the point those issues got worse. But the chance we had to make them better. We can emerge from this crisis stronger than we were before. That's why we are focused on jobs, but also jobs that solve each of these entrenched problems. So let's look at how. We have had a skills deficit. Now on top of that we have more people who need the chance to train or retrain. That's why this budget will target vocational training and apprenticeships we need most and make them free and I don't just mean school leavers, I mean everyone. It will mean more people training and building and construction and agriculture and manufacturing, community health counselling and key work. This will help those who have lost their jobs, retrained and others to train on the job. And while many have lost work, there are others who have labor shortages. Even through COVID-19, people have wanted to buy our high quality food and fiber and that's why in this budget we'll be looking to partner in support 10,000 New Zealanders into the primary sector and the jobs that they need fields now. For our young people, those who so often carry the brunt of crises like this. We will fund 1000 more places and trades academy, expands [Hepoka Tamarana Tai] to support young people into work and western South Auckland, Hamilton, Polydor and East Christchurch and build group training schemes that support Marty apprenticeships. All in all, Mr. Speaker, this is a \$1.6 billion investment into New Zealand's future and into rebuilding apprenticeships and to closing our skills gap. And that will be so important because of our next challenge, Mr Speaker, housing. Our response to COVID on the face of it had a very simple premise early on. Stay home, save lives, but that simple, simple requirement forced us all as a country to ask a question. What if you don't have a home? The answer was simple. We will find you one. And through hard work and huge collaboration between government, local government, EWE and the community sector. That is exactly what happened in the midst of this crisis. We have housed the chronically homeless in New Zealand and now we need to keep it that way. In this budget we are announcing an extra 8000 houses providing \$5 billion of construction stimulus into the economy over the next four to five years for public housing and transitional housing. When combined with what we have already funded, this takes the number of housing places for those who need homes to 17 thousand public houses and transitional houses. This represents the largest public housing building program in recent decades, and I hope it means that COVID-19 will be remembered as a period when New Zealand didn't just stay home. It made sure everyone had a home. Since coming into government, Mr. Speaker, we have seen countless other examples of the underinvestment in New Zealand's infrastructure. We've already invested \$12 billion into the New Zealand Upgrade program and our \$3 billion fund in this budget will be squarely focused on projects that are ready to create jobs but also tackle issues like water infrastructure. But perhaps there is no better example of why this budget can bring together the challenges of today and the challenges of yesterday than the jobs that will create and regional New Zealand to restore our environment. Whether it's working with Eli on pest control to prevent the loss of North Island's. Or working with farmers to tackle everything from Wallaby to thinking waterways or stabilizing riverbanks. Or working with Council, local government, local businesses and dock to employ thousands of people to restore wetlands both spreaded a control and proved tracks and hearts. This is when when. Walden Pine controls alone require on foot labor, chainsaw operators, heavy machinery, operators, helicopters. It has a knock-on effect to accommodation, vehicles, repairs, maintenance and even food providers. In total, this budget creates almost 11,000 jobs for our environment, for our regions, for our people.

And that, Mr. Speaker, brings me to the final challenge I wish to speak to today and that is child poverty. We know this has the potential to get even worse than where we are now, and while we moved quickly even before lockdown, providing increasing government support to those out of work through benefit increases through the winter energy to payment, today again, we focus on kids with a major expansion of the food and schools program. We already started this program and now we expand healthy lunches into schools so that for around 200,000 more children across the country, school lunches will be part of the everyday. Based on what we know, this will also create an estimated 2000 jobs in local communities. Jobs that can sometimes cater for the care requirements of sole parents of mums of dads who might have care responsibilities on their own. And equally important, it will mean in the tough days ahead we can guarantee our most vulnerable kids will get a filling, healthy lunch every school day.

Mr. Speaker, I want to finish where I started. On our businesses, on our job creators, on our innovators, and on those who have carried such a huge burden over these last weeks and months. We know they have faced challenges too.

Challenges Mr. Speaker that do predate COVID. They include the cost of innovation. The needs to constantly make productivity gains. The challenge of growing beyond New Zealand. If you choose to make that leap and many small businesses, Mr. Speaker do need extra support to look beyond just the domestic borders of New Zealand to look to export into Australia and beyond. That's why this budget provides incentives and grants to encourage e-commerce, to train more digital advisers, and provide information and support for small to medium sized enterprises wanting to incorporate ecommerce into their businesses. Mr. Speaker, this is off the back of the significant work of the small Business Advisory Council, which was made up of small business owners, operators and bankers who encouraged us to support small businesses through these initiatives. It sees significant increase in support for entrepreneurs and businesses looking to invest in new products through research and development. This will help create jobs and the jobs New Zealand needs. It also Mr. Speaker puts \$216 million into increasing the number of exporters who will be receiving intensive support from New Zealand trade and enterprise. It will also increase offered by NZTA. Mr Speaker, we know at this time that it has been our primary production, our food producers, our exporters who have been the backbone through the lockdown and they will continue to be our backbone. We need to support more of them to grow their exports, to bring more into those exports, and Mr Speaker to position themselves well in the wake of the recovery, NZTA are well placed to do that and we will support them to expand the businesses that they give up one on one support too. Mr Speaker, we will trade on our brand. It is a brand entrenched and quality and trust and respect of the products that New Zealand trades. And our response to COVID-19 has only further reinforced our brand as a country that invests in its people that supports the health of its people and that puts quality first. Mr. Speaker, I said yesterday that this budget would be about jobs, jobs, jobs. In total it seeks to save as many as 140,000 of them over the next two years. And to support the growth of 370,000 more jobs over four years, Mr Speaker in case the opposition Mr said 370,000 more jobs over the next four years. This budget sets out a clear plan to generate green jobs, rural jobs, jobs rebuilding crumbling infrastructure, and new training opportunities for those who need it. But even this is just stage one. You've heard today about some of our sector recovery funds. We must keep working alongside those industries who have been most gravely affected. Tourism has a package announced today. In coming days, we will do the same for arts, for sports and for larger events, those who have been at the frontline of COVID and its impact. But just as the science and forming our health response evolved, so too will the economic situation, both globally and domestically. It is for that reason that the Finance Minister has announced today the next suite of actions we are putting in place, but has also held back funds to tackle the next phase of our rebuild. That is what will be required to make sure we can be agile and as agile as we have been today. We know Mr Speaker businesses crave certainty in order to plan how they will operate and while there is much we cannot predict in these uncertain times, what I can promise is that we know this is not the end of what we need to do. We will keep working with you. We will keep supporting workers and businesses.

Mr Speaker, you can see the strength of the government in this budget and I do want to thank our coalition partner, our coalition partner, New Zealand. First our Deputy Prime Minister for the partnership bringing this budget together today. I'd also like to thank our confidence and supply partner the Greens for their consistent advocacy to be bold and tackling the challenges of both today and tomorrow. But finally, Mr Speaker. I want to thank our Minister of Finance. Grant, thank you for your determination and for your compassion. Through this crisis, you have acted to protect the jobs and livelihoods of millions of New Zealanders. Today you deliver a budget that will carry us through the crisis and get this economy moving and get us into growth as early as within a year and that is a remarkable thing. So now we get on with it Mr Speaker. We went hard and we went early to fight COVID-19 and that success has opened up economic opportunities. Now it's time to make the most of the head start New Zealand has with this economic recovery. This budget shows how we are positioning New Zealand for that right now, it shows that this is not the time for business as usual. It's a time for relentless focus on jobs, on training, on education. And the role they can all play to support our environment and Mr. Speaker, our people. So, Mr. Speaker, let's begin our recovery. Let's rebuilds together.

### **Speech 39: May 18 (JA39)**

And good afternoon. Today I'm joined by the Education Minister Chris Hipkins as schoolchildren in early learners around the country returned to their classrooms after weeks of a brand new experience of learning at home. But first I'll run through the week ahead. Tomorrow I travel to Rotorua with Minister Davis and Minister Mahuta. We will

meet with tourism and hospitality operators, the mayor of Rotorua Lake District Council, and visit to Puyo Cultural and Tourism Centre to hear about their COVID recovery plans. On Wednesday and Thursday I am in Wellington. On Wednesday I'll be speaking here again at 1:30 to sit out further decision making milestones for level 2 and for level 1 also. That day will come for the release of what is probably best described as a digital diary app. Many of you will have been out and about over the weekend and seen that there have been the development of different apps to be used to support contact tracing. Well this version on Wednesday has been constructed through the Ministry of Health and is a nationally consistent app that New Zealanders and businesses can use to record where they've been and when. It is intended to aid and support physical contact tracing, if it's not to replace them by any means. While there are other similar apps in the space, we wanted to give greater solution to the use of the data that is collected. At which this app happens to deliver, but I'll leave all the further details on that till Wednesday. Over the weekend we have through the PDGF and construction announcements that will fast track the firing up of local economies. Coming back to school and early learning. Just over a week ago, the government announced a pay boost for up to 17,000 of our early childhood teachers, who are often paid less than teachers in the state sector. We increase those rates from a base of between \$45,500 and \$46,800 depending on the qualification, up to \$49,800 as part of an early learning package to lift the quality of early childhood teaching and put first the wellbeing of staff and of children. Today, on the first day back to the classroom in several weeks we add to that, we are reinstating a higher funding rate for early learning services that employ fully qualified and registered teachers. The 100% funding ban the teacher LED early childhood education services was scrapped by the previous government in 2010. We've brought it back in Budget 2020 in recognition that quality early childhood education will be an important part of our response and recovery from COVID-19. At a time when we may see lower demand, potentially for early learning services, this funding will encourage centers to keep their fully trained teachers in work. Minister Hipkins, I'll now hand over to him. He can give us more details on that and this announcement.

#### **Speech 40: May 20 (JA40)**

Good afternoon, welcome to day 7 of alert level 2. Today I want to provide you an update on progress towards our goal of stamping out COVID-19 and moving as fast but also as safely as possible and opening up more of our economy and getting New Zealand moving. I think Rotorua yesterday and getting out and about on the weekend, it was great to see New Zealanders returning to our new, safer, normal cafes were full, I can confirm from multiple experiences, and you can see people also adjusting to rules around social distancing, contact tracing and so on. Last week's budget highlighted our commitment to job creation, keeping people in work and supporting key sectors such as tourism to get back on their feet. And ultimately, the best thing we can do for the economy is to stay on top of the virus and continue our managed de-escalation of restrictions. When the health data says it's safe to do so. We do intend to keep phasing in additional activity under level 2 when the evidence show we can with low to little risk of further outbreaks. As I previously said, though, descent can be more dangerous than the climb. Many countries that have started to reduce their restrictions have experienced a spike in cases. We shouldn't be so bold as to assume that that couldn't or wouldn't happen here. Remember, COVID-19 is still in our community and we know from our clusters that one case can become 90 after a single night out or a single event. It would only take two to three instances of that. For our case though, to escalate back to pre lockdown numbers. No one wants to see that. And so we have entered levels three and two with a degree of caution and the data so far suggests that this has been the right approach. First, the number of new cases of COVID-19 has reduced significantly. There were 31 new cases during the 16 days we were in Level 3, and so far there have only been two new cases in the seven days we have been in level 2. Importantly, all of the cases under both Level 3 and level 2 have been directly traced to existing cases and ultimately represent the long tail of COVID. The last case of community transmission, where the source of the case was unknown was early April. That means we've had three full transmission cycles with no new cases of community transmission recorded in New Zealand. We have not seen any new clusters emerge for more than a month. This gives us a high degree of certainty that there is no community transmission in New Zealand. But our journey is far from over. COVID-19 is still present in New Zealand. And it essentially still present around the world. And while that remains the case, there will be work to be done and there will be risk that needs to be managed. Did I? I just want to sit out a little more detail. Some of what the ongoing management of that risk looks like here in New Zealand. Through every level we will maintain our underlying wall of defense against the virus. Now that includes widespread surveillance and testing. Rapid contact tracing. Physical distancing as a new normal, staying home if even mildly sick.

Regular hand washing and tight measures at the border to stop new cases coming in, that's our new normal. While our border measures carry on, regardless of what level we are at, let me be clear that amendments to the border rules can occur at any level also, so it is possible to have a trans-Tasman bubble, for instance, at level 2. It is not contingent on us being at level 1 for that to happen. The spike in new cases in other countries have experienced in recent weeks as they deescalate their restrictions relate to the very activities that evidence shows us are more likely to spread the virus, mixing and mingling at social occasions. This is the activity that by far and away most concerns us and that we are purposely placing limits on. So tomorrow we take a cautious step forward with bars and clubs being able to open, but with strict level 2 restrictions around being seated and being separated in place in order to ensure that we stay safe. However, I know many people want to return to normal as soon and as safely as we can. And of course, it's everyone's intention. So as we progress through level two, we plan to regularly adjust our settings to allow more activity when the data sees it safe. The first settings check-in will come on Monday when cabinet will consider increasing the size of gatherings. Currently this sits at ten. If the data leading up to Monday continues its positive run, we will have more confidence to lift the size of gatherings. Very importantly, that does apply to things like church services. As we move through level 2 and continue to have better data on which to make further decisions, that will include the opportunity to further increase the size of gatherings again. We will also have the option down the track of potentially relaxing certain physical distancing restrictions. Such as on buses and on planes. Any of you will know that the moment physical distancing requirements means that they are running under full capacity, I believe for planes at 50%, so there is the option of looking down the track at reducing some of those requirements, potentially even while we are still in at level 2, if that's what the data supports. It's important that we get New Zealand moving as fast as we can to limit the economic impact of the virus, which is why we will adopt this nimble approach and take incremental adjustments as and when the evidence tells us it's safe to do so. We do not have to move a full level in order to wind down restrictions, which is something you recall I indicated when we set out the framework for level 2. In the same way we broke the chain of transmission by staying a full 5 weeks in lockdown and then assessed our progress by briefly going into Level 3, I envisaged that we will stay in level 2 until the Director General has confidence that we can be escalated further, but do keep in mind you will keep seeing these incremental changes while we were here and that we will be regularly reviewing those every two weeks. But unlike in Level 4, as I've seen with the rules stay the same, we have that flexibility and that's because our hard won achievement in getting the virus under control now gives us greater choices and flexibility. We are doing well. Our plan is working. And as a result of our team's hard work, we have scoped to get our economy moving again and in doing so not only avoid the worst of the health outcomes others have experienced, we can also try to minimize some of the economic pain. Although our response, we've made decisions based on what is best for New Zealand and followed our own path plan and our own path. And we do that again. We are hopeful this phase de-escalation will continue our success to date while avoiding the surging cases other countries have experienced as they moved out of lockdown. Time will tell, but at this stage we remain cautiously optimistic. Happy to take everyone's question options.

#### **Speech 41: May 25 (JA41)**

Good afternoon, welcome to a brief introduction. Just headline a few announcements for the week and do not open up for questions, but what we'll do this time is just make sure that we front it the COVID questions that we can to Dr. Bloomfield and then we'll just move it towards, you know, if we can. The house sits again this week, meaning select committees are also once again in full swing. I will be in the House on Tuesday and Wednesday as usual. As you would expect, our economic recovery from COVID-19 continues to be my focus this week. On Wednesday I will be holding a virtual summit with Prime Minister Lee of Singapore to mark the one year anniversary of the New Zealand Singapore enhanced partnership. That partnership underpins Corporation and a range of areas. New Zealand's relationship with Singapore has been critical in recent months as we have worked closely to secure critical supplies such as COVID testing kits and PPE, and to ensure trade links remain open to the benefit of our exporters. On Wednesday evening I will participate in a conference call of world leaders in the so-called Early Movers initiative. It's a grouping of nations that by and large went hard and early to beat COVID-19 and are exchanging information on the best approaches to take as many, such as New Zealand, begin to deescalate restrictions. The call is hosted by the Austrian Chancellor and includes leaders from Australia, Norway, Denmark, and Israel, just to name a few. On Thursday, I will attend virtually the local and central government forum and undertake COVID recovery visits in the

Wellington region and on Friday I'll be in the Hawkes Bay for food and economic recovery related visits. Tourism New Zealand has just launched the *do something new* New Zealand campaign encouraging Kiwis to see parts of the country they haven't been to before to help get our economy and tourism sector moving again. And I urge anyone who is in a position to do so to help our recovery and support our local tourism operators by booking a visit to our own incredible backyard. I'm still in the process of looking down my plans for the weekend, but I do intend as much as I'm able to get out and about and support our local economies as well. As signalled last week, Cabinet today discussed the alert level 2 settings and the pathway to move to level 1 as soon as safely possible. Last week I said we would regularly adjust our settings at level 2 to allow more activity to take place when the advice and data says it's safe, we want to get our economy moving quickly without losing the games we have made to date. It takes about two weeks for changes in levels to start showing up in our cases, as we were all now familiar, so we can now be highly confident, more than three weeks after the shift to Level 3, that there are no new cases attributable to the more relaxed restrictions which we had as we stepped down into Level 3 and started moving beyond that. That is very good news and is counter to what many countries overseas have experienced as they loosen their restrictions, with many having seen spikes and cases. This is in large part to New Zealand is sticking to the rules at three maintaining physical distancing, ensuring we limited the activities most likely to spread the virus, and of course, the ongoing role of our border controls and the quarantine at our border. On the basis of this good news, though, Cabinet has decided we can now increase the size of all gatherings to 100 from 12 noon this Friday, 29 May. This means gathering such as church services, weddings, and funerals can now have 100 people present. They also no longer will be a need for funerals or town hall to pre-register by the Ministry of Health as they had been previously doing today. The move to 100 also allows community sport to operate more easily, and I understand sporting codes have been working on operational guidance with Sport New Zealand. Large scale events like concerts will obviously still have those restrictions applied in terms of size, but the shift to 100 person maximum means many more gatherings will be able to occur from now on. These changes are good news for business and for those looking to plan larger gatherings, it's another step and renormalizing of life as we continue to stamp out the virus. It is the government's view that we should also move as quickly as we safely can to alert level 1. On that basis, Cabinet will check in again on our sittings on the 8th of June and we've agreed that no later than the 22nd of June, 4 weeks from today, we will consider them the move to alert level 1. The fact that we are even and, I should add, this is based on the advice of the Director General of Health who supported these recommendations and made these recommendations. The fact that we are even making these decisions shows the success we have had to date as a country in fighting the virus and highlights we can now make choices many others can't. In fact, the increase in gathering signs means we now have some of the most permissive settings of any of the countries we compare ourselves to, including Australia. Going hard and early has paid off for the economy and now we need to just continue the level of vigilance that has got us here. We are still in a global pandemic. Cases continue to grow overseas, and we do still have people coming home, but for the most part, many aspects of life can and should feel much more normal. Let's not lose that advantage. However, no matter how fast we reopen our economy, there will continue to be tough times to come. For me, protecting New Zealanders from the economic head of the virus is our priority, and we are investing in jobs and support to business to keep Kiwis and work. We're also investing in training to help people shift jobs too, but we know that there will be job losses and for many, losing their job will be incredibly hard on them and their family financially. That is why today, as you are aware, we have announced enhanced financial support for New Zealanders who lose their job due to the virus. A full-time worker will receive \$490 tax free a week for 12 weeks. Keep pushing them through the initial. In which they lose their job. This will also add much needed stimulus to the economy. Our team of 5,000,000 stacked together to defeat the virus and now we need to stick together to support those bearing the brunt of the virus's economic impact. I urged New Zealanders to be kind to each other in lockdown, and we now need to continue that support to one another during our economic response to the virus also. We're now happy to take your questions.

#### **Speech 42: May 26 (JA42)**

[...] Our government's decision to eradicate *Mycoplasma bovis*. I'm joined by Minister O'Connor who will speak to our success so far in getting *M. bovis* under control. Our beef and dairy sectors are the backbone of our economy. COVID has demonstrated that once again, while the rest of the country was in lockdown, agricultural production continued, earning us much needed export receipts, and just like with COVID, going hard and early to beat *M. bovis*

has paid dividends for us. In both cases the economic benefits of our strong bio security and health responses are obvious and have only enhanced our international brand as a producer of high quality, safe food. Our economic success lies in our value added and it lies in our reputation and in a post COVID world safe food will be increasingly sought out. Once again, our health response can enhance our economic success. I do want to hand over to Minister O'Connor, but in doing so I do want to note that our success with M. bovis at this point in the journey does place us among the world's first to have ever attempted to eradicate in M. bovis. And while there's a junior lift to treble, I'm very proud of the work that's been done by EPRI, the industry farmers, but also the minister. So Minister of Commerce.

### **Speech 43: June 2 (JA43)**

This is another busy week for the government as the economic recovery from the virus continues. Parliament today is sitting and so obviously present and will be again tomorrow. Tomorrow I have my regular meeting with the farming leaders group where I'll be checking in on the sectors' response to COVID, job opportunities and the agricultural sector also, for those displaced by the virus and just generally look at the health of our exporters. On Thursday. Thursday I will visit Kolkata. With the government's tourism recovery package as its focus and on Friday I have an economic recovery related visit in Auckland. Today cabinet discussed in very broad terms our alert level decision making timetable. The good news is, as I have flagged earlier today, we are ahead of schedule, previous advice and modelling had assumed a more persistent and potentially longer tale of cases which under our significantly more open settings at level 2, especially with large gathering sizes we have in New Zealand compared to other countries posed a real risk of further spread, hence caution to date. Many other countries have experienced spikes and cases when lockdown restrictions have been eased and that is what we have been keeping a close eye on at level 2. So far that tail or spike has not eventuated and there is increasing optimism that we will not see any cases within the transmission cycle since moving to level 2. In fact, as of today, we have had only one case of COVID recorded in the country, while at the same time having some of the most relaxed settings in the world, at least according to Oxford University. Our strategy of going hard and early has paid off, and in some cases beyond expectation and what modelling and data had predicted. Therefore, because of our team of 5,000,000 extraordinary commitment to beating COVID, that means we have the enviable situation of having choices. And we could well be in a position to move to level 1 even earlier than planned. I can confirm that Cabinet will now fully review the alert level settings at its next meeting on Monday, June 8 if and only if there are no further unexpected cases over the coming days and we could be in a position to move to alert level 1 that week. I'll be providing further details of alert Level 1 this week in terms of what it looks like, but it's sure the last remaining restrictions on physical distancing and restrictions on mass gatherings are removed, though we will need to maintain strict border controls to prevent any new infections arriving from overseas and moving to level one so soon. We will be one of the best countries in the world to have experienced a COVID outbreak and then return to that level of normality so quickly and I think our whole team should feel very proud of that. For now, however, there is a risk we need to continue to monitor with crowd sizes only moving to 100 over the weekend. We will keep an eye on numbers through this week, especially the end of the week, to see if new cases come through and we'll be also looking closely at the results of testing of people with respiratory symptoms to see if any of these infections are due to residual COVID-19 in our communities. And keeping in mind again at the ongoing caution we had due to the issue of asymptomatic. Today, Education Minister Chris Hipkins joins me to sit out the details of the free trades training and apprenticeship package announced in the budget. Supporting New Zealanders who lose their job because of the virus is at the heart of our economic response. There have already been significant job losses and there will be many more in the coming months. Unfortunately, the economic damage caused by the virus is something every country is experiencing and not something we can avoid. However, we can avoid leaving people behind and we can ensure New Zealanders and their families are supported. You will have heard me speak before a number of times of my memories of big job losses in the 80s and 90s when unemployment was also high, that memory is etched in my mind and informs my values and decisions today. That's why the government is so focused on job creation at this stage of the recovery, creating opportunities for those without work to move into something quickly. However, for many that will require retraining and getting new skills, so this trades package is an important part about overall plan is about ensuring people can acquire skills and get jobs and the parts of the economy critical to our COVID rebuild and can do that for free. Which is why we are announcing today that the package set out in the budget will mean any form of apprenticeship will be free from

July 1 this year. This is a direct help to small businesses thinking about taking on an apprentice and also ensures we are incentivizing even more people entering the trades that we have skills shortages. The theme of the budget was rebuilding together and this investment and those who have lost their jobs and the businesses taking on apprentices shows that plan and action. Businesses, workers and governments working together to create jobs and fill with school shortages. I'll now hand over to Minister Hipkins.

#### **Speech 44: June 8 (JA44)**

Good afternoon. Today is day 26 of alert level two and day 17 without any new cases of Covid-19 in the country. Today is also day 75 of being in a Covid alert level of any kind.

Our team of 5 million has both sacrificed and achieved a huge amount in just under 11 weeks as the world reckoned with, and continues to reckon with, a virus that went from obscurity at the start of the year to a global pandemic that will linger, with second waves a constant reality.

As it spread rapidly around the world, we all saw people losing their loved ones and their livelihoods at a rate that was never acceptable to us. And so here in New Zealand we went hard and early with a single plan that had a dual purpose – and to protect lives and livelihoods.

Self isolation for all returning travellers came into place first – 17 days after our first case. We closed our borders to everyone but New Zealanders 20 days after our first case. Our first economic package, including the critically important wage subsidy scheme, was in place 19 days after the first case. Most other countries took more than 40.

And then New Zealanders did something remarkable in our fight to beat Covid-19. We united in unprecedented ways to crush the virus. Our lockdown was in place 26 days after our first case, when we had just over 200 cases.

Google tracking showed that during our lockdown, New Zealanders massively reduced their movements – by 91% to retail and recreation – better than Australia, the UK, the United States, and nearly every other place we compare ourselves to.

Had we not acted, 11 days in to our lockdown we were projected to have 4000 cases. We had 1000 and one of the lowest rates per capita in the world.

That was what the sacrifice of our team of 5 million was for. To keep one another safe, and to keep one another well. And as much as we could, we have.

We acknowledge those we have lost in our battle to beat Covid-19.

Our goal was also to come out the other side as quickly and as safely as we could. A place where our borders continue to be our first line of defence but where all current rules and restrictions on businesses and services are essentially lifted.

Where all the rules for hospitality, such as single service, separated tables, and people being seated, all end. Where there is no requirement for physical distancing in workplaces and in public places. Where all gatherings of any size can occur. Where life feels as normal as it can in the time of a global pandemic.

And today, 75 days later, we are ready.

Today, there are no active cases in New Zealand.

We have tested almost 40,000 people for Covid-19 in the past 17 days and none have tested positive. We have had no one in hospital with Covid-19 for 12 days. It's been 40 days since the last case of community transmission, 22 days since that person finished their self-isolation.

And so today I can announce that Cabinet has agreed we will now move to level one – to get our economy fully open again – and we will start almost immediately.

We move down to Covid-19 alert level one from midnight tonight.

With over 100,000 new cases being reported each day, the challenge of Covid remains around the globe and so it remains here. We are not immune to what is happening in the rest of the world. But unlike the rest of the world, not only have we protected New Zealanders' health, we now have a head-start on our economic recovery.

That's because at level one we become, if not the most open, one of the most open economies in the world. Oxford University publishes a government response stringency index, ranking countries from 0 to 100 in terms of their level of restrictions. Before today's move to level one, New Zealand was at 33.3, while Australia was at 62.5. We were already nearly twice as open as they were.

The Reserve Bank's analysis shows the economy under level one is expected to be operating just 3.8% below normal levels. That's an improvement from the estimated 8.8% below normal under level two, 19% below normal under level three, and 37% under level four.

And it was encouraging to see economists recognise that activity under level two was also stronger than expected. Westpac last week said the economic recovery was tracking faster than expected, and that activity like heavy and light traffic movement, and electricity use is back to, or above, pre-Covid levels.

Zespri too has reported that despite the global challenge of Covid, its exports are well ahead of last year, with 5.7 million more trays shipped this season so far than last season along with its highest sales yet in Europe as demand for healthy produce grows.

At level one, we expect the continuation of recovery. After all, at level one we can hold public events without limitations. Private events such as weddings, functions and funerals without limitations. Retail is back without limitations. Hospitality is back without limitations. Public transport and travel across the country is fully opened.

This freedom from restrictions relies though heavily on the ongoing role that our border controls will play in keeping the virus out. We must remain mindful of the global situation and the harsh reality that the virus will be in our world for some time to come.

We are confident we have eliminated transmission of the virus in New Zealand for now, but elimination is not a point in time – it is a sustained effort. We almost certainly will see cases here again – I want to say again, we will almost certainly see cases here again – but when that occurs it will not mean we have failed. It is the reality of this virus. We must be and we are prepared for future cases.

That's the reason our border remains our first line of defence as we aim not to import the virus. Borders remain closed at 15 of 17 comparable countries. Our managed isolation and quarantine at the border will continue and it will be as important as ever as we know this is a potential pathway.

And that is key because we want to not just move to level one – we want to stay there.

And so there is a key ask I have of all of you today, of businesses. We are asking all businesses and services where the public visit or enter to provide people the opportunity to maintain their own diaries of where they've been.



And so our All of Government team will continue working with sector groups, businesses, hospitality firms, churches, schools and others to encourage them to display QR codes via posters at the entrance of premises – as most of you will have seen at businesses as you were out and about at the weekend – so that everyone can maintain their diaries via the NZ Covid Tracer App.

Manual sign-in is no longer required, but we do ask that you put up a QR code poster at the door of your premises so people can scan in and can keep a record for themselves. Ongoing improvements will be made to ensure these QR posters are as accessible as possible for businesses.

We have also worked with the events sector on a voluntary code to ensure attendees' details are captured at these bigger events where we know the virus can spread easily.

The reason for all of this is simple. If we get one or two cases in future, which will remain possible for some time to come due to the global situation and nature of the virus, we need to shut down those cases fast. The last thing we want to do is move back up the alert system again.

So this is a key new behaviour we are asking all New Zealanders to adopt at level one. You can do and go wherever you like, we just ask you keep a record of where you have been by scanning in – or noting down your movements for yourself.

I have one more thing to ask. At level two, agencies have been managing the return of employees to work with around 50% of people back at their places of work last week. Now, at level one, you can, unless you feel unwell, go back to your place of work.

There has been some good adaptation over the past couple of months with flexible working. This is progress and has helped people with care arrangements and has also helped to avoid traffic congestion – these things we should not lose. But we can balance that with ensuring we also have thriving CBDs.

For our part we have asked the State Services Commission to issue new workplace guidance to make it clear that every public sector worker should return to their usual place of work, taking into account flexible work policies.

We've got to level one, now let's make our next goal supporting our recovery, right across the economy.

I know that having such a firm sight on success for so long has sometimes made the road we've taken seem longer and the steps we've taken seem more laboured. At every step there have been those who've pushed us to do something different, to go faster or further, but our collective results speak I think for themselves.

That caution and hard work got us down the mountain safely when the descent is always the most perilous part. Moving to level one now is the dividend for everyone's hard work, for now.

But we need our team of 5 million for the next phase. And that is to get New Zealand moving again, as we move from the collective call to action of Unite against Covid-19 to Unite for Recovery.

I encourage you to buy, play and experience New Zealand-made to get our country moving again. Consider it an extra form of support to visit our country, buy our local products and support our local businesses.

For my part, this week is about the government's recovery efforts, and focus on jobs. And you'll be seeing that in my agenda.

Tomorrow I will be in the Bay of Plenty, visiting a kiwifruit and avocado packhouse – to discuss how we can further assist the sector to attract workers, noting horticulture has already picked up some 2000 workers who have lost their

jobs due to Covid. I will also check in with our Mana in Mahi scheme that gives employers the equivalent of the unemployment benefit to hire those who might be reliant on it, at an electrical business installing solar power and heat pumps in Tauranga.

On Wednesday I'll be in Kaikoura for a tourism announcement. On Thursday I'm in Auckland making a health infrastructure announcement and on Friday, following our \$30 billion investment to protect jobs and restart the economy due to Covid, I will speak to the Vision Week web summit where I will share further details of how the government is working with business on New Zealand's economic recovery and rebuild from Covid-19.

While we're in a safer, stronger position there's still no easy path back to pre-Covid life but the determination and focus we have had on our health response will now be vested in our economic rebuild.

And so while the job is not done, there is no denying this is a milestone. So can I finish with a very simple thank you New Zealand.