

INFORMATION REQUEST	
COVID-19: 15 April 2020 CBC	
Deadline: 14 April 2020	Date of Response: 14 April 2020

## Purpose

1. This note provides you with advice on the framework for moving from Alert Level 4 to lower Alert Levels. A paper on the framework will be considered by the Cabinet Business Committee (CBC) on Wednesday 15 April.

## A range of work is in progress to support Cabinet's decision on a step down from Alert Level 4

2. New Zealand has an overall strategy of eliminating COVID-19 by keeping it out of the country and rapidly stamping out any outbreaks. To achieve this goal, New Zealand is currently at Alert Level 4 ('lockdown'), which will last until at least 22 April 2020.
3. On 9 April 2020, COVID-19 Ministers agreed that, on 20 April 2020, Cabinet will consider whether at the conclusion of the initial lockdown period, New Zealand will remain at Level 4 or move to another level or mix of levels [CAB-20-MIN-0130 refers].
4. COVID-19 Ministers directed officials to report back to CBC on 15 April 2020 on:
  - 4.1. Detailed measures required at lower Alert Levels, and operational preparation underway to implement these measures
  - 4.2. Whether a regional approach to Alert Levels could be taken, with an initial sense of which regions or areas might be suitable for such an approach.
5. Advice on a framework for lower Alert Levels will be considered by CBC tomorrow, 15 April. Further advice on a regional approach to Alert Levels is still being developed, and will be considered by COVID-19 Ministers on Thursday 16 April. We will provide you with a further information note in advance of the COVID-19 Ministers meeting.

## The CBC paper seeks agreement to the framework for moving from Alert Level 4 to lower Alert Levels

6. The paper seeks agreement from Ministers to the framework for moving from Alert Level 4 to lower Alert Levels. It notes that it is too early to judge whether the conditions have been met to move down to Level 3, and that a decision about whether and when to step down a level will be made by Cabinet on 20 April 2020.
7. The starting point for recommending what is permitted at Alert Levels 2 and 3 is the Government's elimination strategy. Any de-escalation is subject to evidence of, and confidence in, declining public health risks around our three main health

controls: detecting transmission; stopping transmission; and stamping out clusters.

8. The paper outlines what permitted and restricted activities could look like for each lower Alert Level, the compliance and enforcement approach at Level 3, and how a move to Alert Level 3 could be operationalised and communicated to the public.
9. The paper notes that restrictions can be relaxed in some key areas under Level 3, enabling people to:
  - 9.1. Connect better with loved ones through expansion of household bubbles
  - 9.2. Get back to work if they cannot work from home while limiting interaction with the public
  - 9.3. Start returning children to school and continue to support distance learning
  - 9.4. Access a wider range of consumer goods by allowing delivery of any goods from any business to homes.
10. An overview of the proposed settings for lower Alert Levels is set out at Table 1 of the Cabinet paper, and the full settings are at Annex One.
11. The paper discusses a transition option based on taking a staged approach when moving to Alert Level 3, and gradually loosening restrictions. This would align with the overall elimination strategy because it incrementally allows more people movement and contact. This approach will avoid overwhelming systems that have been dormant for a while and may have initially limited capacity when returning to Alert Level 3 (e.g. some modes of transport). Further detail on this approach will be provided to Cabinet on 20 April.
12. One setting that will not change moving from Level 4 to Level 3 is what we do at the border. At every Alert Level maximum border measures are maintained because of the risk that importing COVID-19 will undermine our domestic health controls, triggering a return to a high Alert Level for an extended period of time.
13. Existing legal powers and authorisations can be used to give effect to Alert Level 3 measures, including an Order under section 70(1)(f) of the Health Act 1956, and powers in the Civil Defence Emergency Management Act 2002.

**The compliance environment will become more complex as we move away from Alert Level 4**

14. Scaling back from Level 4 will mean Police's powers will change, and the ability to enforce compliance will grow increasingly difficult as measures become more permissive and New Zealanders' expectations of freedom more evident. In addition, Police's social licence to operate in a Level 4 environment is unlikely to translate to Level 3.
15. How we Police in this environment will have long-term impacts on Trust and Confidence and our on-going ability to police with the consent of New Zealanders.

16. Restriction fatigue will rise, incentives for non-compliance will grow as business premises start to re-open or regional differentiation comes into effect, and it will be harder to detect non-compliance (there will simply be more people out-and-about). This means voluntary compliance becomes even more important.
17. Clear and simple communication with the public is critical to ensuring good compliance and will make enforcement easier. The rules of lower Alert Levels need to be simple and clear but flexible enough to leave some detail to be worked through with each industry.
18. Challenging the assumption that Police is the default compliance manager will also be critical. Government agencies have agreed to Police's proposal to establish an All of Government Compliance Operating Model. The model draws on Police experience of large-scale operations management and should significantly improve recognition of the appropriate Police role and a shared compliance effort across relevant agencies.

#### **A change in Alert Level will create a sharp increase in Police demand**

19. A relaxing of lockdown restrictions is likely to result in an immediate short-term surge in certain crime and non-crime issues, creating a sharp increase in core Policing demand. Additionally, matters that were not able to be reported to Police over the lockdown period will now increasingly be reported. Among other things, increases in the reporting of family harm and mental health related incidents, child abuse, and commercial burglaries can be expected.

#### **Police is preparing for a step down from Alert Level 4**

20. Anticipating and understanding the issues likely to impact on Police in the post-lockdown environment will allow for pre-emptive planning and the development of effective courses of action. It will also provide the organisation with the opportunity to proactively work with partner agencies to prevent the issues from eventuating, or mitigate their effects.
21. Operational preparedness for moving to Level 3 is underway, as is work to support a transition to Level 2.
22. Police has emphasised the importance of clear public communication to ensure people can prepare for the move to lower Alert Levels. This will also support the compliance and enforcement of Alert Level 3, when that step down occurs.

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