



On June 11, 2020, Dr. Jane Rovins, Senior Lecturer and International Coordinator at the Joint Centre for Disaster Research (JCDR) at Massey University, discussed New Zealand’s “go hard, go early” approach to managing the Covid-19 public health crisis and the nation’s emerging path to economic recovery.

### **Travel**

- New Zealand suspended domestic travel during its highest level of alert (4) between March 25 and April 27, then gradually eased restrictions on movement as it returned to normal operations (Level 1) on June 8. While domestic travel resumed, international travel remains limited to citizens, diplomats and foreign nationals holding a residence class visa.
- All incoming travelers are placed in separate managed isolation facilities for 14 days, such as hotels, based on whether they are symptomatic or not. All expenses are covered by the government.

***Insight:** Hawaii could consider using separate hotel facilities for symptomatic and asymptomatic travelers as quarantine-designated areas and cover the entire cost, including the provision of essential services, such as food delivery and sanitary items.*

### **Economy**

- New Zealand has elaborated financial support schemes to help businesses and their employees recover from the effects of Covid-19. Support includes wage subsidies, leave schemes, business cash flow and tax measures, small business loan schemes, and insolvency relief for businesses. The overall cost of these measures amounts to NZ\$12.1 billion (approx. US\$8 billion), equivalent to 4 percent of New Zealand’s GDP.
- Even before Covid-19, New Zealanders’ tourism destinations were predominantly domestic, generating a total revenue of NZ\$23.7 billion. Total spending of New Zealanders traveling abroad amounted to NZ\$9 billion. New Zealand is now trying to reorient the share of citizens who used to travel abroad to domestic tourism. To support the tourism economy, it has set up a [website](#) and allocated resources to help workers and businesses in the industry to recover.

***Insight:** Hawaii could consider incentivizing more Kama’aina discounts and subsidizing some of the hospitality and/or entertainment costs to encourage interisland travel to the areas in Hawaii that have been most hard-hit by the lockdown.*

### **Community & social distancing measures**

- New Zealand citizens were given 48 hours to prepare for the Level 4 lockdown. Beginning on March 25, movement was restricted to localized bubbles. Only essential services (e.g., grocers, doctors, and life safety home repair) were allowed to operate, meaning that choices like where to buy groceries were restricted to local options. Public gatherings, including funerals and religious services, were banned. The two-week school holiday was bumped up and when it was time to return to classes, students transitioned to online lessons.
- The country returned to Level 3 on April 27. Food delivery was allowed, essential domestic travel was reinstated, schools reopened only for essential workers’ children.

This document was prepared by Eugenio Benincasa, Ariel Stenek, and Keoni Williams. For more information, please contact Dr. Crystal Pryor (crystal@pacforum.org), Director of Nonproliferation, Technology, and Fellowships at Pacific Forum. These preliminary findings provide a general summary of the discussion. This is not a consensus document. The views expressed are those of the HIF chair and do not necessarily reflect the views of all participants. The speaker has approved this summation of their presentation.

- On May 13, the country entered Level 2, which had two phases. The first phase allowed primary and secondary schools to fully reopen. Restaurants reopened under strict serving guidelines, bars reopened with a no-standing policy, and masked gatherings of up to 10 individuals were allowed, while churches remained closed. The second phase allowed masked gatherings of up to 100 registered individuals and domestic travel to resume. On May 20, the Ministry of Health released the [NZ COVID Tracer app](#) to support contact tracing in New Zealand. The app notifies users if they have come into close contact with someone who has tested positive.
- The use of masks and gloves was widespread early on, but over the course of the pandemic their efficacy has been questioned. Without definitive evidence of masks' effectiveness in preventing infection, the government left the choice of using them up to citizens.

***Insight:** As businesses reopen, Hawaii could encourage the use of face masks but not make them a requirement for entrance, instead mandating effective virus mitigation methods like good hygiene practices, social distancing, and visitor registration records.*

### **Public messaging, enforcement, and protecting vulnerable communities**

- New Zealand's success in eliminating the virus in June 2020 is attributed in part to the government's "go hard, go early" approach. Leaders communicated a message of collective effort and Prime Minister Ardern repeatedly referred to the country as a "team of five million."
- Prioritizing Covid-19 multimedia messaging [translated in numerous languages](#) allowed the government to be open and transparent and connect with all community groups about the public health crisis, restrictions on movement, and police enforcement of the lockdown.
- Minority and low-income households were contacted directly by local NGOs and nonprofits to help families transition through the lockdown period.
- Police partnered with Maori communities to set up roadblocks to their communities in the Northland. Maori communities experienced lower rates of infection during the pandemic than their Caucasian counterparts.
- Despite declaring the virus eliminated for now, the government has emphasized that they could return to lockdown if necessary. However, given New Zealand's geographical features, a future lockdown could be limited to specific regions, islands, or cities.

***Insight:** Complementing translated documents with media campaigns that use respected members of minority audiences to communicate messages in their native language may help increase trust in government and improve outcomes in communities with higher risk of infection and poor access to health care.*