

Executive Summary

Up to a million Kiwis live overseas with a right to return to New Zealand. While the country is now effectively free of Covid-19, with cases only in the country's quarantine facilities, the pandemic rages abroad and is unlikely to abate anytime soon. Even if a vaccine is developed this year, scaling up its production will take time. In the meantime, the Government must scale up its own capabilities and capacity within its managed isolation and quarantine facilities.

This report provides a pathway toward safer scaling-up of border capabilities. It begins from the principle that safe entry should be allowed, and that risky entry must be made safe.

Beginning from that principle, the report argues that the New Zealand border should be reopened to travellers arriving from places that are similarly free of Covid-19. Islands in the Realm of New Zealand depend on travel to and from New Zealand and are currently Covid-free. Taiwan has no community transmission and has pandemic control systems at least as strong as New Zealand's. Maintaining border restrictions against travel to and from safe places imposes substantial harm. Continued closed borders to the Pacific Islands imposes an onerous humanitarian burden along with economic calamity.

Like kayakers in stormy seas rafting up together for safety, New Zealand should 'raft up' with other Covid-free places.

Entry from other locations must be made safe. And while closing borders entirely can feel like the right response when other parts of the world are in dire straits, it is impossible. Too many Kiwis live abroad and may wish to return. The managed isolation and quarantine system must be able to scale up to accommodate those people along with potential non-citizen visitors from similar locations.

This report argues that the Government should shift its approach. Rather than considering charging *some* arriving Kiwis for their stays in managed isolation, it should instead directly subsidise the stays of returning Kiwis whose stays the Government would wish to support with a voucher system.

Under the proposed voucher system, those wishing to come to New Zealand – citizens or not – would be required to present before boarding proof of a booking in one of the approved managed isolation facilities. Eligible returning Kiwis could apply their vouchers toward the full or partial cost of their stay in managed isolation. Vouchers could be set at a level consistent with the cost of a stay at a basic facility. Other returnees would need to bear the full cost of their stay. Facilities would be free to set their own room fees, but the Government would charge each facility for the full cost of police, military and other staff involved with managing isolation.

The Government would continue to oversee safety in managed isolation and private accommodation facilities would continue to provide the rooms. But this shift would make it far easier for returning Kiwis, and others, to manage their own arrivals while freeing the Government of the burden of scrambling to place arriving visitors into scarce spaces in managed isolation. It would also encourage

other facilities to shift into providing managed isolation services (under Government oversight and supervision).

The present system is strained. It struggles to accommodate need, but must scale up substantially if Kiwis abroad choose to exercise their right to return home. Allocating scarce positions in managed isolation by Ministerial discretion forces Ministers into impossible positions in deciding whose need is greatest.

Being able to scale up safely is critically important. The entire country made incredibly costly efforts to make New Zealand effectively Covid-free. Some Kiwis continue to bear those costs through family separation, unemployment or failing businesses. And for a long time yet, the country will be paying off the new government debt accrued to help the economy survive lockdown.

Improving border protocols to allow for safe entry at scale would not only help those worst affected by the collective elimination efforts, it would open up opportunities that simply were not available in the pre-pandemic world. Rather than trying to estimate the extent of New Zealand's likely economic losses, the country could be looking at stronger economic opportunities.

Recommendations

The New Zealand Government should:

- Set a principle to allow safe entry into New Zealand;
- Recognise that entry from safe places by people who have not recently been to risky places is safe. Re-open the border to entry from Taiwan and the Covid-free Pacific Islands and assess whether individual Australian states could be considered safe;
- Support the Pacific Island neighbours in ensuring safe external borders;
- Continue to assess the adequacy of safety protocols on flights to risky places and at airports handling passengers from risky places;
- Allow greater scaling-up of managed isolation by:
 - Allowing those arriving to take up a greater portion of the cost: full user-pays for non-citizens and a voucher-based co-payment scheme for returning residents and citizens;
 - Certifying facilities as authorised providers of managed isolation or quarantine services;
 - Charging isolation facilities for the isolation management services provided by the government;
 - Allowing facilities to provide their own management services if they are able to credibly demonstrate capability of doing so safely, but only under strict supervision and process auditing;
 - Requiring all arrivals book their own accommodation in authorised isolation facilities and provide proof of booking before boarding flights to New Zealand;
 - Training potential isolation management staff;
 - Charging isolation facilities for the isolation services provided by the government on a full cost-recovery basis;

- Layering additional safety protocols for non-citizens arriving from risky places to further reduce risk as numbers increase, such as post-isolation testing and daily health check-ins;
- Consult with New Zealand's epidemiologist community over the medium term as both testing and app-based technologies develop to assess whether alternative sets of restrictions could reduce risk at lower cost for travellers from less risky but not risk-free places.

Introduction

New Zealand became a lifeboat in stormy, global, pandemic-ridden waters thanks to the country's incredibly costly effort and sacrifice. Keeping this lifeboat safe matters.

Since closing its borders in March, New Zealand has only allowed entry of returning citizens and residents and of those who gained a Ministerial exemption. Both groups are placed under managed isolation restrictions.

Strong isolation and quarantine restrictions at the border are critical in maintaining New Zealand's hard-won lifeboat status. Every incoming arrival from places with high levels of the Covid-19 virus creates risk not only to New Zealand, but also to any other Covid-free country with which New Zealand might wish to re-establish travel arrangements.

Quarantine must be safe.

Quarantine has not been safe, or at least came under extreme strain.¹

The shift to military oversight in June should bring improved practice and compliance, but the system remains strained. It has struggled to maintain safe practices for the small number of returning citizens that New Zealand has so far welcomed home, and will struggle further as it increases capacity to meet demand.

New Zealand's lifeboat can be kept safe. But the system needs to change.

It must change so this lifeboat can safely 'raft-up' with other Covid-free places in the Pacific Islands and Taiwan – and hopefully others to come. The Government's decision to delay opening to the Pacific Islands while seeking a travel-bubble arrangement with Australia has imposed undue hardship on the Islands.

It must change so the families separated by closed borders can more easily, and safely, be made whole.

And it must change so those who can help in New Zealand's economic recovery while riding out the pandemic can be safely admitted onto this lifeboat. These include: overseas students, tech sector employees able to work remotely, sports players wishing to compete in stadiums – and more.

Perversely, the Government's focus on entry by Ministerial exemption for economic or compassionate need plausibly underlies the strains faced by New Zealand's quarantine system. Simply put, if the Minister has determined the entry of a film crew is economically necessary, it is far too easy for officials to cut corners in implementing safe entry. If someone's compassionate reasons for returning are sufficiently heartrending, it is also too easy for officials to bend the rules.

¹ See discussion by Justin Giovannetti, for example. "A failure of New Zealand's defensive wall against Covid-19". <https://thespinoff.co.nz/politics/17-06-2020/a-failure-of-new-zealands-defensive-wall-against-Covid-19/>

The entire system needs to put safety first. Admitting people to New Zealand by Ministerial exemption is not a system that can possibly scale and, worse, puts safety last. Safety must come first. The shift to military oversight has and will almost certainly continue to improve compliance with necessary procedures for safer management. But the system needs to be able to scale up to accommodate more arrivals.

Presently, the small number of contracted quarantine spaces means the Minister must weigh the economic worthiness of a camera operator against the plight of a Kiwi abroad whose family member is in dire circumstances. No Minister can possibly weigh those incommensurable needs.

If we begin instead begin from a principle that safe entry, and only safe entry, is allowed, with a greater emphasis on user-pays arrangements, we can build a system that not only far better protects our lifeboat, but also eliminates the terrible inequities built into the current system.

We can build a system that scales up when Kiwis want to come home, so that more safe quarantine providers enter the market if existing facilities fill up.

And we can build a system that, by putting safety first and not putting entry at the discretion of the Minister, far better enables our economic and civic recovery.

It is difficult to imagine a more pressing priority. The humanitarian and economic case for getting this right is overwhelming.

In designing safe border systems, the New Zealand Government can learn from countries with safe border entry procedures, such as Taiwan or South Korea. The New Zealand Initiative has profiled both states in previous research reports.² This report draws on those insights.

Safe Entry

New Zealand's border entry protocols should begin from the principle that safe entry is allowed, on a user-pays basis for non-citizens and non-residents, and for those returning Kiwis that the Government considers should bear some or all of their own costs. If entry meets normal, pre-Covid-19 immigration and visa conditions, *and entry is safe*, entry should be permitted.

From that principle, some visitors will be *safe by definition* if they are coming from Covid-free countries, while other visitors *must be made safe*.

Let us first consider travel from safe places.

Rafting up with other safe places

In rough seas, kayakers take hold of each other's boats for greater stability. New Zealand can and should 'raft up' with other Covid-free places to develop better practices for entry into the joined lifeboats, weather the consequences of the global storm and renew unhindered travel of people who pose no viral risk to others.

² <https://nzinitiative.org.nz/reports-and-media/reports/research-note-lessons-from-east-asias-Covid-19-containment/>

Islands in the Realm of New Zealand – including Tokelau, the Cook Islands and Niue – are presently Covid-free.³ New Zealand closed its border to those islands to protect them against contracting Covid-19 from Kiwi visitors – not to protect New Zealand. Since these islands pose no Covid-19 risk and the islands depend on travel connections, normal travel arrangements with them should be reinstated immediately, so long as those islands’ governments are happy to welcome a return to normal travel arrangements.⁴

The humanitarian case for reopening that border is pressing. The islands depend on travel connections to New Zealand, and there is no defensible reason for keeping that border closed. New Zealand could find itself surrounded by very distressed societies if the border is closed to the Pacific for a prolonged period, which would have significant implications for our domestic and international politics.

New Zealand could resume normal travel arrangements with most Covid-free Pacific Islands at no risk. The table below is drawn from the most recent World Health Organisation (WHO) situation report, released in June.⁵ While there is some risk in reopening to Guam, New Caledonia and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, other islands have zero cases of Covid-19 or are at least twenty-eight days since their last case.⁶

Arrivals from Covid-free locations with safe external borders should be considered safe by default – or at least about as risky as travel within New Zealand. Direct travel between Taipei and Auckland by those who have not spent any time recently in a third country is not particularly more risky for spreading Covid-19 than travel between Auckland and Invercargill.⁷ It should be allowed. Similarly, travel to Covid-free Australian states which have maintained quarantine restrictions on travel from riskier states could be allowed well before New Zealand opened more broadly to Australia. Travel from Victoria is, at time of writing, manifestly unsafe.⁸

The set of Covid-free Pacific countries, states, provinces and territories could be considered a wider ‘Pacific bubble.’ New Zealand can join its lifeboat to theirs to help each other ride out the storm.

But safety also requires trust in each other’s border practices and confidence in the strength of their public health measures.

³ The Realm of New Zealand consists of those areas in which the Monarch of New Zealand functions as Head of State. In addition to New Zealand, the Cook Islands, Niue, and Tokelau, several small islands including the Kermadecs fall within the Realm, as does the Ross Dependency. New Zealand traditionally exercises a somewhat pastoral role with respect to other islands in the Realm: New Zealand retains responsibility for defence and some responsibility for foreign affairs.

⁴ If any substantial outbreak does emerge in New Zealand, the border can always be closed again to protect the Islands.

⁵ The Covid-19 Joint External Situation Report of 12 June was the most current report available as of 21 July. It is available at <https://www.who.int/westernpacific/emergencies/Covid-19/pacific/situation-reports>

⁶ Note that the most recent WHO Situation Report is now substantially out of date. Officials should assess each case carefully before reopening the border to normal travel.

⁷ Taiwan has a much larger population and entry from larger places does bring *some* small amount of risk, but where Taiwan’s testing regimes are very strong, and their case numbers remain lower than New Zealand’s, it is difficult to see how direct flights to and from Taiwan impose any substantial risk.

⁸ It remains highly likely that the Australian federal government would not allow Australians to return from New Zealand without undergoing quarantine, even if New Zealand is effectively Covid-free. In the same way that New Zealand can and did unilaterally reduce its tariff rates on imports without free trade agreements, New Zealand can open to travel from safe Australian states. If the Australian Prime Minister then wishes to make it difficult for Australians in safe states to take a winter holiday in New Zealand, that is for him to discuss with his electorate.

Pacific Island Countries & Areas – Situation in Numbers

Reporting Country / Territory / Area	Total cases	Total Deaths	State of Emergency Declared	Days Since Last Reported Case
American Samoa	0	0	Yes	-
Cook Islands	0	0	Yes	-
Guam	182	5	Yes	-
Fiji	18	0	Yes	55
French Polynesia	60	0	No	38
Kiribati	0	0	Yes	-
Nauru	0	0	Yes	-
New Caledonia	21	0	No	3
Niue	0	0	No	-
Marshall Islands, Republic of	0	0	Yes	-
Micronesia, Federated States of	0	0	Yes	-
Northern Mariana Islands (Commonwealth of the)	31	2	Yes	-
Palau	0	0	Yes	-
Samoa	0	0	Yes	-
Solomon Islands	0	0	Yes	-
Tokelau	0	0	No	-
Tonga	0	0	Yes	-
Tuvalu	0	0	Yes	-
Vanuatu	0	0	Yes	-
Wallis and Futuna	0	0	No	-
Total	312	7		-

Table 1: Countries, territories & areas with reported laboratory-confirmed COVID-19 cases & deaths (data as of 12 June 2020).

Members of a travel bubble will need to provide assurance of the quality of their border controls, quarantine and contact tracing, along with isolation measures for those cases that do make it through. Isolation can fail, testing can yield false negatives, and rare cases have long incubation periods.

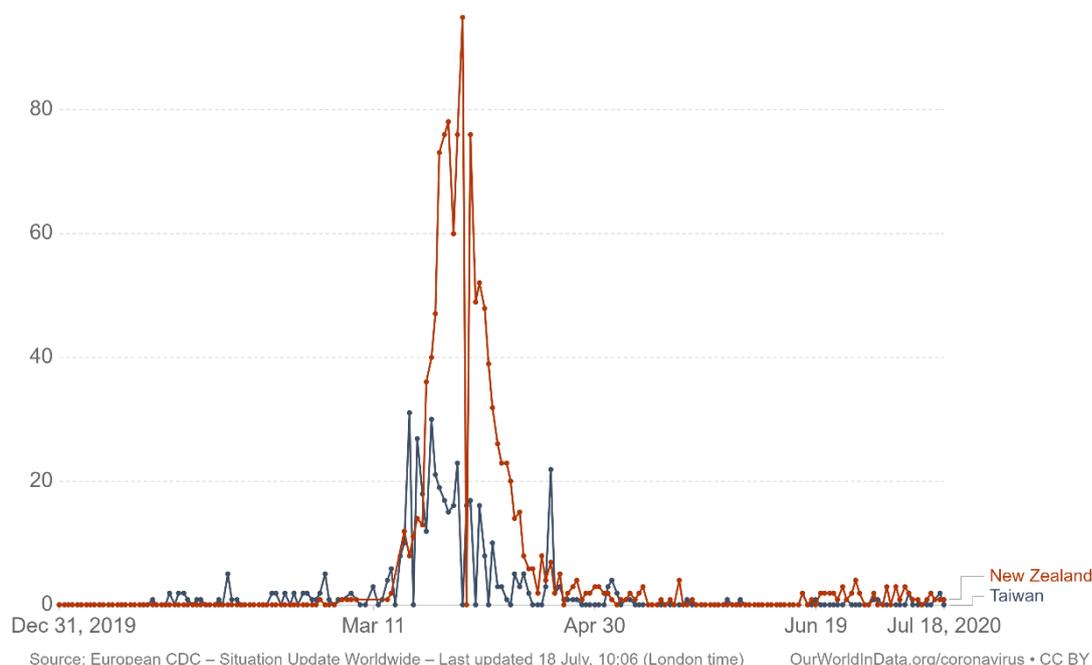
Developing shared oversight regimes cannot be done overnight but all members of the greater Pacific bubble would benefit by sharing notes about improving practice. And New Zealand’s Pacific Island dependants should be able to rely on assistance from New Zealand in ensuring their border practices are safe.⁹

But developing those shared oversight regimes should not delay re-opening the border to safe places. Until those regimes are in place, members of the shared ‘bubble’ may find themselves under travel restrictions should any outbreak eventuate – but no worse off than they are currently with borders closed.

⁹ University of Otago epidemiologist Professor Nick Wilson suggests New Zealand might need to offer extra border control support to Pacific Island nations regarding cargo shipping in particular, to ensure crew remain onboard rather than taking unsafe shore leave. Personal correspondence, 29 June.

Daily confirmed COVID-19 cases

The number of confirmed cases is lower than the number of total cases. The main reason for this is limited testing.



With appropriate oversight regimes and trust in the quality of each other's systems and processes, open borders can be maintained within the greater Pacific bubble. New Zealand's contact tracing and managed isolation regime has advanced sufficiently that fresh Covid-19 cases should not result in community transmission.

Should any community transmission eventuate, localised restrictions or suppression, including exit restrictions, should be able to keep the outbreak in check. An open border to the Cook Islands, for example, could be maintained for New Zealand overall, but with travel restrictions for anyone in contact with communities where an outbreak is suspected. If Taiwan and New Zealand can trust the other's systems, the two could allow travel even if localised restrictions are sometimes necessary.

Making Entry Safe

It is tempting to simply deny anyone entry onto New Zealand's lifeboat or into the shared Pacific bubble – to remain floating together far from more dangerous seas. It is, after all, impossible to completely derisk entry from risky places. Operational procedures in even the best quarantine protocols can fail and coronavirus testing comes with a risk of a false negative result.¹⁰ Events of early June did not inspire confidence in New Zealand's systems.

But up to one million Kiwis live overseas,¹¹ half of which live in Australia, and all have the right to return. Preventing their entry would be neither legal nor ethical. Even compelling returning citizens to

¹⁰ A recent metastudy suggests that false negative rates are 100% four days before the onset of symptoms, decline to 20% three days after the onset of symptoms, then increase again. See <https://www.acpjournals.org/doi/10.7326/M20-1495>. Repeated testing can be a useful check against false negatives, along with additional layered protections.

¹¹ Statistics New Zealand, 19 March 2020, "[About 100,000 New Zealand residents travelling overseas](#)". The report notes between 600,000 and a million New Zealanders live overseas, and about 570,000 live in Australia.

pay for their own isolation services may be legally risky; the Government is, at time of writing, working on mechanisms for incorporating user fees for managed isolation.

If any broader Pacific bubble included complete prohibitions on entry from risky places, New Zealand would immediately be left out of that arrangement because Kiwis need to be able to return safely from risky places and at scale. The same is true for any country expecting returning citizens and residents.

New Zealand and other Covid-free places will have to manage safe entry procedures regardless of how open to the world they might want to be. But the lessons gleaned from rafting up with other safe places will *strengthen* New Zealand's own border practices. A Pacific bubble would, over the longer term, depend on shared confidence, support and mutual oversight of each others' systems to improve both confidence and good practice.

Scarce Spaces

The Government's managed isolation and quarantine system is characterised by scarcity. There are far too few spaces available to accommodate returning Kiwis and too little consideration of how user-pays arrangements could help improve that access.

Currently, the government books out as many hotel rooms as it can at the price it is willing to pay to create a set of managed isolation facilities. It also allocates staff to monitor those in isolation, test as required and enforce restrictions. As the contracted rooms are filled, entry is rationed with priority granted to returning residents and citizens. Non-citizens wishing to join us must make special application for one of those scarce spaces.

Different facilities face different costs in converting to providing managed isolation and quarantine services; more facilities will be willing to shift into managed isolation services if payment on offer were higher. But the cost to the Crown in securing as many facilities as are demanded by returning citizens is enormous. Faced with a real budget constraint, governments will always wish to ration spaces by queuing. But many returning citizens would be happy to pay at least some of the cost of their managed isolation to avoid the queue or to secure a place in an isolation facility with more amenities.

This framework has made it difficult to expand the capacity of managed isolation facilities and find suitable hotels and motels willing to convert – particularly at prices the government is willing to pay. It is also difficult to arrange supervision of returning citizens who may resent being in quarantine, even if they face no monetary cost for the stay.¹²

Overall, this reactive system has struggled to meet demand and compliance with basic public health principles was, under the Ministry of Health's supervision, too lax. The shift to military oversight in June will have improved protocols and practice at the isolation facilities. But the New Zealand Defence Force's review also emphasised the need to develop a national strategic planning capability for the Managed Isolation and Quarantine system.¹³

¹² A Ministry of Defence review, <https://www.beehive.govt.nz/release/government-strengthens-managed-isolation-system>, noted that arrivals from Australia were surprised and frustrated by managed isolation requirements. The review recommended permanent police presence in its facilities.

¹³ See the Ministry of Defence's review, available at <https://www.beehive.govt.nz/release/government-strengthens-managed-isolation-system>

This report outlines a method to build a better system to scale to demand, manage the costs, ensure safety, and target scarce resources in risk-appropriate ways. The authors do not pretend at greater protocol expertise than trained epidemiologists. Rather, the focus is on compliance with those protocols and expanding the system's capabilities.¹⁴

INTERNATIONAL AIRLINE INITIATIVES

Global airlines are finding ways to prevent their aircraft from spreading Covid-19. Qantas requests all passengers to wear face masks, has imposed social distancing rules and requires its crew to wear masks and gloves.¹⁵ Both Qantas and Korean Air also fumigate their planes.¹⁶

On 24 June, Korean Air announced new guidelines for its domestic and international flights:¹⁷

- All passengers must wear masks at all times;
- Cabin crew must wear personal protective equipment including masks, gowns and goggles;
- To achieve social distancing, Korean Air subdivides entrance zones beginning at the back of the aircraft;
- Aircraft are regularly fumigated. If suspicious patients arrive on a flight, the aircraft is quarantined and thoroughly sterilised before its next flight;
- All passengers' temperatures are checked and onboard precautionary measures like hand sanitiser are available.

Aircrew can pose substantial virus spreading risk. A good example was in Australia when four Qantas flight attendants not subject to isolation requirements tested positive for Covid-19 on a repatriation flight from Chile in April.¹⁸ Ensuring the adequacy of safety procedures in civil aviation rises in importance as the number of flights and travellers increases.¹⁹

¹⁴ For example, Nick Wilson, Michael Baker and Martin Eichner sensibly suggest the combination of mandatory masks on all flights to New Zealand and thermal imaging at the airports could substantially reduce the risk of outbreaks. They also suggest that, if mask wearing by arrivals from Australia could be made compulsory, it may replace managed isolation. The combination of managed isolation, testing and mask-use on flights would have a risk of one outbreak every 34.1 years. Compulsory mask use and testing at days three and 12 after arrival, and screening but no use of managed isolation, would result in one outbreak every 29.8 years. The layering of other enforced controls can substantially reduce risk. See Wilson et al, 2020. "Estimating the Impact of Control Measures to Prevent Outbreaks of Covid-19 Associated with Air Travel into a Covid-19-free country: A Simulation Modelling Study.

¹⁵ <https://www.cdc.gov/quarantine/air/managing-sick-travelers/commercial-aircraft/infection-control-cabin-crew.html>

¹⁶ <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2020-02-26/airlines-unleash-herpes-disinfectant-for-virus-tainted-planes>

¹⁷ https://www.koreanair.com/global/en/about/news/travel_info/2020_03_covid/#cta-medium=/global/en/2020_04_covidmeasure.html#par_text

¹⁸ <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/apr/06/returning-qantas-crew-members-tested-positive-for-coronavirus-but-were-exempt-from-quarantine>

¹⁹ New Zealand's epidemiologists are best placed to conduct that assessment. Mask requirements on airplanes by both staff and travellers, and in airports, may be warranted. The adequacy of procedures for airline staff will also become more important as the number of flights increases. It may prove inappropriate, for example, for staff who have served on flights to risky places to take shifts on flights within New Zealand or on flights within New Zealand's Pacific bubble. Assessing the adequacy of current practices is beyond the scope of this report and is better handled by relevant experts.

While there is no effective difference between citizens and non-citizens arriving from risky places, the two situations require different processes.

Overseas visitors can and should pay the full cost of their managed isolation,²⁰ and can be required to carry insurance against the costs on New Zealand's health system should they be Covid-positive. Returning Kiwi citizens would not face such requirements. Tougher conditions to substantially reduce risk can be imposed on non-citizens arriving from risky places that cannot easily be imposed on returning citizens.

This report consequently treats the two cases differently.

Managing citizens' return from risky places

Scaling up provision of isolation facilities for citizens, when nobody knows how many Kiwis abroad might wish to return and when each arrival costs the government about \$3800,²¹ is both difficult and costly if the government foots the entire bill and acts as a booking agent.

The Government has considered co-payment schemes, or user charges. The Opposition has also suggested user charges for returning Kiwis. While the Government and Opposition will differ somewhat about which returning Kiwis should help in covering the costs of their stays in managed isolation, and which should see some or all of those costs covered by the government, both have suggested imposing fees on at least some returning Kiwis.

This report suggests instead a voucher-based system.

Management and oversight of isolation and quarantine facilities by the military and police would remain in place, at least for the immediate future. But rather than spending time and effort in matching arriving guests to available rooms, the government's role would instead focus on certifying facilities as suitable for managed isolation, ensuring compliance with protocols and offer trained staff to manage isolation.

Both the Government and Opposition have wished to help cover the costs of managed isolation for some returning Kiwis, and to require other returning Kiwis to help to cover the costs of managed isolation. Under the voucher system, this report proposes, the Government would provide potential returnees with a voucher redeemable for a stay at one of the authorised managed isolation facilities.

The value of the voucher could be equivalent to the cost of a stay at a basic managed isolation facility or could be less generous in cases where the government would wish the returning Kiwi to bear a greater share of the costs. The Government would charge managed isolation facilities for the cost of services provided by the police, military, and other agencies in managing isolation; those facilities would be free to set their own fees for visitors in isolation.

Returnees would be responsible for booking themselves into approved isolation facilities and would be free to top up the value of the government's voucher with their own funds to stay instead at a preferred venue, or to arrive in the country at times of higher demand.

²⁰ The stay of the Avatar crew at Auckland's SO Hotel was funded by the visitors under a trial of user-pays isolation plans. See Dileepa Fonseka, "How 'user pays' quarantine could work," Newsroom, 22 June 2020. <https://www.newsroom.co.nz/2020/06/22/1238727/how-user-pays-quarantine-could-work>.

²¹ <https://www.stuff.co.nz/national/politics/300038658/govt-ponders-charging-as-border-isolation-costing-4k-per-person>

MANAGED ISOLATION AT HOME?

Many East Asian states have implemented effective and safe isolation measures.²² For example, Hong Kong's isolation system begins at the airport with a health declaration, consent form and coronavirus testing.²³ Arrivals who test negative are taken to the temporary Holding Centre for Test Results (HCTR) before heading to a government-run facility for a 14-day quarantine.

South Korea and Taiwan follow similar procedures but allow for self-isolation at home, under stringent protocols. During the 14-day self-isolation period, a new arrival must be in regular contact with government authorities and provide updates on any symptoms.²⁴ The Taiwanese government fully subsidises additional quarantine expenses²⁵ while the South Korean government covers some costs of diagnostic testing and accommodation fees.²⁶

Anyone choosing to self-isolate at home must follow strict procedures:

- Occupy a separate room away from the rest of the household;
- Remain a certain distance (1.5 metres in Taiwan) from all household members;
- Do not share meals or bathrooms;
- Ensure diligent and regular sanitisation of all shared spaces;
- Wear masks when in public, including in transport to their isolation facility.²⁷

Violation of quarantine rules can result in hefty fines.²⁸ Non-citizens can be subject to deportation. Compliance is strictly monitored.

²² Hong, Leonard. Lessons from East Asia's Covid-19 Containment. *The New Zealand Initiative*. May 25, 2020. <https://nzinitiative.org.nz/reports-and-media/reports/research-note-lessons-from-east-asias-Covid-19-containment/>

²³ See Eric Crampton, "Economic recovery would be faster if NZ linked to other safe countries". *Dominion Post*, 17 May 2020. Available at <https://www.stuff.co.nz/business/121538313/coronavirus-economic-recovery-would-be-faster-if-nz-linked-to-other-safe-countries>

²⁴ Korean Ministry of Health and Welfare. Quarantine System: Korean Government's Response System. *Korean Ministry of Health and Welfare*. Accessed on April 20, 2020. http://ncov.mohw.go.kr/en/baroView.do?brdId=11&brdGubun=111&dataGubun=&ncvContSeq=&contSeq=&board_id=

²⁵ Lee, I. Virus Outbreak: Health minister lays out rules for social distancing. *Taipei Times*. April 2, 2020. <https://www.taipeitimes.com/News/taiwan/archives/2020/04/02/2003733850>

²⁶ Dudden, A; Marks, A. South Korea took rapid, intrusive measures against Covid-19 – and they worked. *The Guardian*. March 20, 2020. <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2020/mar/20/south-korea-rapid-intrusive-measures-Covid-19>

²⁷ FAQ: Taiwan's 14-day quarantine requirements. *Taiwan Today*. March 18, 2020. <https://taiwantoday.tw/news.php?unit=2,6,10,15,18&post=173589>

²⁸ Everington, Keoni. Quarantine violators in Taiwan could be slapped with NT\$1 million fine. *Taiwan News*. February 21, 2020. <https://www.taiwannews.com.tw/en/news/3879338>

Citizen rights can involve trade-offs. Invasive monitoring of returning citizens and strict requirements for home isolation facilities allows returning citizens to isolate safely at home, rather than being required to stay at a managed isolation facility.

During an emergency, flexibility about particular civil rights can allow stronger protection of human rights overall. What is the greater human rights violation: allowing contact tracing teams limited access to cellphone data to achieve location monitoring and to ensure compliance with home isolation, or banning self-isolating at home? If strict adherence to normal privacy rights increases the risk of renewed nationwide lockdowns, what system best maintains rights overall?²⁹ There is no obvious correct answer, but it is too easy to pretend trade-offs do not exist. Protecting one aspect of basic rights may be at the expense of other basic rights.

Those boarding flights to New Zealand would be required to provide proof of a booking at an approved isolation facility before boarding. The Government would wish to maintain a stock of basic isolation facilities³⁰ for those arriving without an appropriate booking.

Making returning citizens and residents responsible for their own bookings, weighing the costs of different arrival times and of different facilities against their need to travel on dates, would bring immediate benefits. Rather than queuing for scarce spaces, those wishing to return could look at prices for bookings at managed isolation facilities on different dates, and the amenities on offer at different facilities, and choose those which best suited their needs.

This is hardly a new innovation: international travellers always balance the cost of travel on different dates against their own ability to shift travel across different dates. And travellers have always weighed the costs of stays at hotels, motels and resorts against the amenities available at the locations.

But applying this simple shift would make it far easier to manage demand and to encourage more facilities to cater to those arriving from overseas. Travellers themselves would shift their journey away from peak times if doing so made sense. Rising prices would encourage other potential providers to seek certification to convert to managed isolation facilities. Facilities able to shift into providing managed isolation only at higher cost would look at booking prices over the next several months and assess whether that shift made sense.

Allowing more facilities to provide managed isolation requires scaling up the government agencies responsible for checking facility suitability, for managing isolation at those facilities, for compliance monitoring and audit along with worker training. Greater reliance on user-pays mechanisms would make that scaling-up more affordable.

The government could set the voucher reimbursement level based on the cost of a stay at a basic managed isolation facility, including the bill the government would impose for providing Defence,

²⁹ Kluth, Andreas. If We Must Build a Surveillance State, Let's Do It Properly. *Bloomberg*. April 22, 2020. <https://www.bloomberg.com/opinion/articles/2020-04-22/taiwan-offers-the-best-model-for-coronavirus-data-tracking>

³⁰ The government has considered the use of campervans for backstop facilities if its current isolation facilities are booked out. That kind of reserve capacity can potentially be easily maintained. See <https://www.tvnz.co.nz/one-news/new-zealand/government-looking-using-campervans-managed-isolation-auckland-hotels-fill-up>

Health and Police services to ensure safety.³¹ In locations where providing those services would be more expensive, the government would charge the facility a higher fee for service provision. And if, over time, capabilities and trust developed such that a facility could safely take on some of those management responsibilities (alongside government oversight and process audit) the government could charge a lower fee since its own costs would scale back.

This proposed voucher system would not represent a privatisation of the isolation system. The current managed isolation system already relies on the government contracting with privately owned accommodation, with the government managing isolation within that facility. The voucher system would require the government, ultimately, to pay some of the cost of a citizen's stay at a privately owned (or even council-owned) facility. It would also maintain government management of those isolation facilities, unless over time a facility demonstrates it can provide safety to a standard commensurate with government management.³²

But by allowing a greater user-pays component and for prices to vary with demand and cost, the voucher system could scale up to accommodate far more returnees or visitors. To take a very simple example, the Chief Executive of one of the Members of the New Zealand Initiative was earlier this year placed in managed isolation at the government's expense after an overseas trip. Rather than taking up a scarce space in the government's contracted facility, the returning Kiwi could have stayed at his own expense at an approved facility of his choice, freeing up a space at more facilities.

And where the government's cost of providing isolation management services at basic facilities would be worked into the value of a voucher, the system would make it easier for the government to hire staff to accommodate facilities operating with higher costs: higher cost facilities would pay the government more to cover those costs, while passing the charges along to guests.

Some facilities can be made safe for use in managed isolation only at higher staffing cost: the configuration of hallways may require more security staff, or shared restroom facilities in places like university dormitories may require much higher staffing to ensure separation and sanitation between visits. The facility would need to pay the government a fee consistent with the government's higher staffing cost, which would allow the government to hire more staff. If the facility could still profitably provide managed isolation services on the combination of the government's fixed per-traveller voucher payment, and charges levied on those staying at the facility, then it could convert into a managed isolation facility. Under current arrangements without provision for user co-payments, that facility would be ruled out as being too costly to manage.

Letting more people join our lifeboats

The system described for citizens returning from risky places would largely apply to visitors from overseas, but with two substantial differences.

³¹ The costs of providing managed isolation will vary across facilities, both because of the costs of management and because of the costs of hiring out the rooms. A voucher paying more than the cost of a stay at the least expensive facility, but less than the cost of a stay at the median facility, would encourage more providers to enter the market to provide basic isolation services for the voucher-only market, while leaving room for co-payments by returning residents to take up a greater part of the burden.

³² Any shift to private management of the isolation experience would need to be accompanied by strict oversight. All staff would need appropriate training. Breaches of protocols quickly reported would lead to remedial training and, potentially, the loss of authorisation to self-manage. Unreported breaches would lead to severe penalties.

First, and obviously, the government would not cover any part of the cost of managed isolation for those who are neither citizens nor residents. The system would entirely be based on user-pays arrangements. Those willing and able to pay for their own travel to New Zealand and for their own stay at a managed isolation facility should be able to, subject to normal visa requirements.

But some options open up when dealing with non-citizen arrivals that are not available, or are politically more difficult, when considering returning citizens. This is important if the number of arrivals from riskier places scales up substantially.

Even with best practices, there is a risk that cases of Covid-19 which are late to develop will escape managed isolation. If one arrival in a thousand arrives with the virus, and if 1% of those cases has a late onset, resulting in a false-negative test while at managed isolation, then it should be expected that one visitor out of every hundred thousand will mistakenly leave managed isolation while still Covid-19 positive.³³

Adding additional protections in situations where it is politically feasible and cost-effective makes a lot of sense.

Non-citizen visitors impose risk because of their volume. But each individual non-citizen arrival will impose lower costs and risks than a comparable returning citizen, if New Zealand wished to impose stricter conditions on arriving non-citizens.

The government may choose to impose penalties on any Kiwi misbehaving and bringing undue risks to others while in managed isolation. However, a non-citizen misbehaving while in managed isolation also could easily be deported, with no refund on fees paid.

And where many Kiwi citizens returning from Australia may resent the imposition of isolation requirements, that will not be the case for non-citizens arriving from risky places who rightly see New Zealand as an incredibly attractive lifeboat in shark-filled waters.

If New Zealand's epidemiologists considered it worthwhile, before boarding a flight to New Zealand non-citizens could be required to present proof of a booking at an authorised isolation facility *and* a recent negative Covid-19 test result.³⁴ Taiwan, in conjunction with Stanford University, is trialling pre-flight testing to help reduce the length of stays in managed isolation.³⁵ If Taiwan's trial is successful, it could help New Zealand increase safety and allow for shorter stays in isolation.³⁶

³³ Half a million Americans were added to America's Covid-19 caseload in the two weeks from 15-30 June: about 0.15% of America's population. The true Covid rate in the US will likely be higher than the number of confirmed cases.

³⁴ A digital thermometer would be provided on entering managed isolation, bundled into the isolation facility's fees. Daily temperature checks are required as part of isolation. The traveller would keep the thermometer on exit and could be required to send in a picture, by SMS or email, of their current temperature on request.

³⁵ <https://fsi.stanford.edu/news/stanford-works-taiwan-testing-global-travel-quarantines-and-safely-getting-back-sky>

³⁶ Similarly, there is potential to further liberalise travel as antigen tests develop and knowledge of the duration of immunity progresses. When the science advances sufficiently that those who have recovered from Covid-19 can be safely considered to be immune, those who are immune could be allowed entry without restriction. But only when the science has advanced sufficiently.

GREECE REOPENS TO TOURISM. A CAUTIONARY TALE?

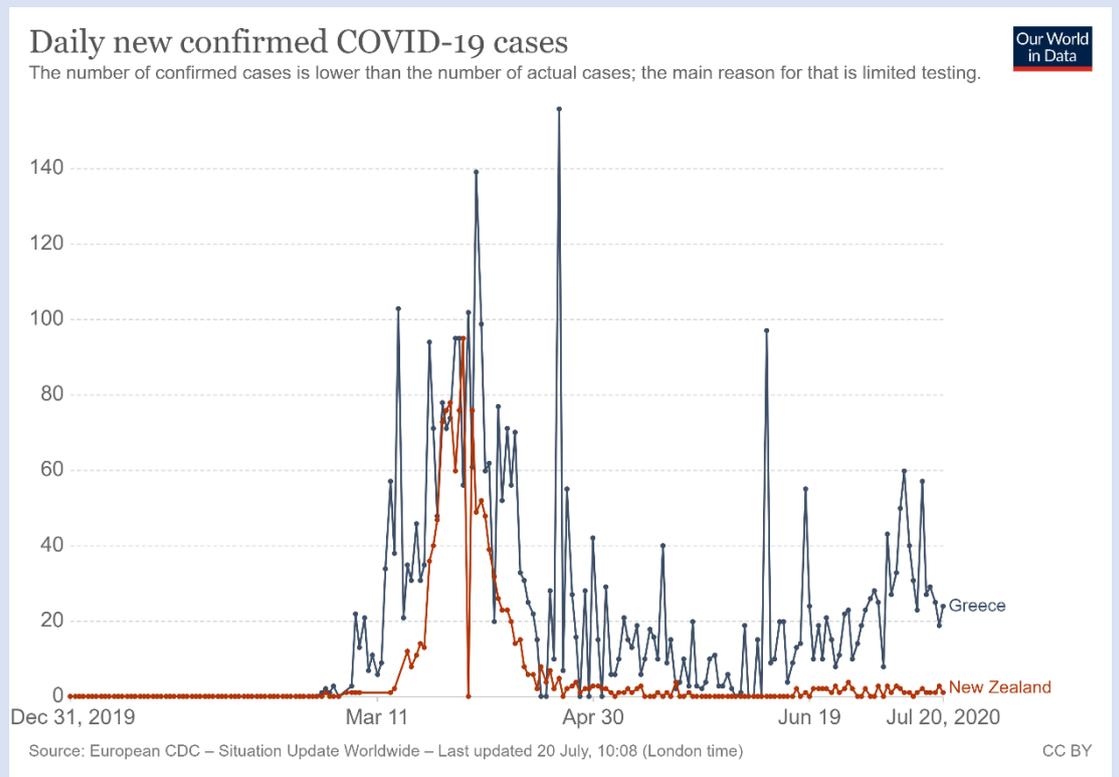
Greece, like New Zealand, relies heavily on tourism. On the recommendation of the European Aviation Safety Agency (EASA) and the Infectious Diseases Committee, the Greek government decided to initially fast-track opening its borders to 29 countries deemed low-risk and safe including South Korea, Israel and Australia on 15 June, with mandatory stays in isolation for others.³⁷ It has since opened to all European countries except Sweden and the UK. Two days before arrival, all prospective visitors must fill out a form showing their accommodation plans and where they are coming from. They are also swab-tested on arrival.

Greece's selective border re-opening focused on countries deemed to have sufficient protocols in place to be considered safe, along with continued domestic measures to reduce the risk of spreading the Covid-19 virus.

Greece has not pursued an eradication strategy. Its weekly confirmed case count now averages around one hundred.³⁸ The Greek government has sought to balance public health against economic considerations, given the country's reliance on tourism.³⁹ If its border strategy results only in manageable increases in case numbers, New Zealand could learn from that experience. More limited restrictions could be used for arrivals from locations that have not eliminated Covid-19 but are relatively low risk.

Yet if case numbers explode in Greece, New Zealand could learn from that as well.

Some experiments are best trialled by others.



³⁷ <https://www.forbes.com/sites/tamarathiessen/2020/06/04/greece-welcomes-all-tourists-june-15-why-you-face-quarantine/#7f36d2d5702c>

³⁸ <https://ourworldindata.org/coronavirus/country/greece?country=~GRC>

³⁹ <https://www.ekathimerini.com/254220/article/ekathimerini/news/pm-says-focus-on-labor-market-amid-sluggish-tourist-season>

Daily temperature checks could be required for seven days after a person leaves managed isolation.⁴⁰ A final follow-up Covid test could be required after that or if any symptoms present. Non-citizens could be required to carry phones with Google Maps location tracking and sharing enabled,⁴¹ to simplify the task for contact-tracing teams. Compliance could be encouraged through threat of deportation.⁴² Non-citizens choosing to travel to New Zealand would automatically be subject to such requirements.

While those kinds of layered protections can add safety, easier ability to ensure compliance can reduce the cost of management of facilities exclusively catering to non-citizen arrivals. While a strong police presence may be necessary for facilities catering to returning New Zealanders, as recommended by the recent review, that presence may not be needed to ensure compliance among overseas students in managed isolation if the threat of deportation and the loss of paid tuition fees looms heavily. Instead, the government may only need to provide more basic security staff but with specialised training in hygienic control procedures.⁴³

Over the longer term, as more places substantially reduce Covid-19 cases but without eliminating the virus, New Zealand could consider a more graduated response. Non-citizen arrivals from lower-risk places could be subject to a pre-flight Covid test, a shorter period in managed isolation and requirements for post-isolation health check-ins and testing if epidemiologists judged the risk reduction achieved through pre-flight testing sufficient to shorten the duration of managed isolation.⁴⁴

The New Zealand Initiative has discussed those developments with two companies building credible app-based solutions for registering test results and for daily health and location monitoring. Those solutions remain a few months away. They could well become part of a more layered response that scales protections to the risk profile of a traveller, and that makes greater safety more affordable, convenient and reliable. Any such developments must be in thorough consultation with New Zealand's epidemiologists.

But scaling up managed isolation systems does not depend on digital solutions. These would instead allow for a later easing of restrictions without compromising safety.

⁴⁰ A digital thermometer would be provided on entering managed isolation, bundled into the isolation facility's fees. Daily temperature checks are required as part of isolation. The traveller would keep the thermometer on exit and could be required to send in a picture, by SMS or email, of their current temperature on request.

⁴¹ Recent work by the government's former Chief Science Advisor Sir Peter Gluckman, Rt Hon Helen Clark and Rob Fyfe suggested that arrivals from low-risk places might need only a seven-day isolation period. See Gluckman et al, 2020. "Re-engaging New Zealand with the World", Conversation Paper, Koi Tū: The Centre for Informed Futures, University of Auckland.

⁴² Wilson et al, op cit, also suggest that masks could also be required for recent arrivals from overseas. Compliance could be difficult, however, and there would be risk that overenthusiastic Kiwis might take too great a policing duty upon themselves. The proposal *may* be impracticable. They propose it in lieu of managed isolation for travellers from low-prevalence places like Australia.

⁴³ Failures due to untrained staff at isolation facilities directly caused the renewed outbreak in Victoria, Australia. Appropriate training of staff as isolation facilities is critical, along with audit processes to ensure that proper practices are followed. See Farah Hancock, Newsroom 2 July 2020. "Lessons from Victoria: Don't lose elimination status." <https://www.newsroom.co.nz/lessons-from-victoria-dont-lose-elimination-status>

⁴⁴ Recent work by the government's former Chief Science Advisor Sir Peter Gluckman, Rt Hon Helen Clark and Rob Fyfe suggested that arrivals from low-risk places might need only a seven-day isolation period. See Gluckman et al, 2020. "Re-engaging New Zealand with the World", Conversation Paper, Koi Tū: The Centre for Informed Futures, University of Auckland.

The traveller's experience, under a better system

Under the proposed system, travel to New Zealand by people who have not recently visited unsafe places, and whose flights only transit through other safe places with similar restrictions, would face only normal visa requirements. Travel to and from safe places would be under no more Covid-restriction than travel within New Zealand. Currently, the Covid-free Pacific Islands and Taiwan would be considered safe under those criteria. New Zealand's epidemiologists would need to provide regular advice on developments abroad; some Australian states may be considered safe but would require ongoing monitoring.

INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT EXPERIENCES

Taiwan provides an excellent example of safe airport protocols.

Epidemiologist and former Taiwan Vice-President Chen Chien-je said that Taiwan's measures were successful because the island nation took prudent actions at the airports with effective restrictions and adequate domestic epidemic preparation at the borders.⁴⁵

The country's airports have the following policies:⁴⁶

- Mandatory temperature checkpoints (including infrared thermography);
- Regular sterilisation and fumigation of frequently-touched zones and objects;
- Separate disembarkation paths at airports to prevent intermingling between at-risk arrivals and safe arrivals;
- Strong encouragement to wear face masks and keep social distancing;⁴⁷
- Easy access to hand sanitisers;
- Health questionnaires must be filled out upon arrival;⁴⁸
- Airport Covid-19 testing measures;
- A smartphone app called "Line" requires travellers to register on a contact tracing system using QR codes.⁴⁹

Other airports, such as Hong Kong International and Australia's Canberra Airport, have similar temperature checking infrastructure. In New Zealand, Wilson et al have also suggested that

⁴⁵ Chen, Chien-jen.; MacKenzie, Ellen. Inside Taiwan's Response to COVID-19. *John Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health*. April 25, 2020. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Rel6ROZNbkk>

⁴⁶ Hong, Leonard. Lessons from Abroad: Taiwan's Covid-19 Containment Model. *The New Zealand Initiative*. May 12, 2020. <https://www.nzinitiative.org.nz/reports-and-media/reports/research-notelessons-from-abroad-taiwans-Covid-19-containment-model/>

⁴⁷ Whitfield, Kathryn. Taipei seems to have the virus in hand. Now I worry about returning to the UK. *The Guardian*. March 7, 2020. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/mar/07/coronavirus-outbreak-taipei-taiwan-china>

⁴⁸ Taiwan Centers for Disease Control. Taiwan timely identifies first imported case of 2019 novel coronavirus infection returning from Wuhan, China through onboard quarantine. January 21, 2020. <https://www.cdc.gov.tw/En/Bulletin/Detail/j99d7-x-hlc8AhOvTySo6w?typeid=158>

⁴⁹ Wang CJ, Ng CY, Brook RH. Response to COVID-19 in Taiwan: Big Data Analytics, New Technology, and Proactive Testing. *JAMA*. 2020;323(14):1341–1342. doi:10.1001/jama.2020.3151 <https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jama/fullarticle/2762689>

layered protections including symptom questionnaires, thermal cameras and mask use can reduce the risk of outbreaks.⁵⁰

While the New Zealand government may not wish to follow Taiwan in requiring returning citizens to register for contact tracing, non-citizens joining this lifeboat from risky places could face greater restrictions, which would enable New Zealand to accommodate more visitors safely.

As more countries and regions become safe, they could be added to the safe list. But travellers would be cautioned that conditions may change at short notice in case of Covid outbreaks. Those willing to bear that risk, or who are willing to pay for flexible airline tickets or appropriate travel insurance, would still be welcome to travel to New Zealand.⁵¹

Travel from riskier places would be more difficult. The would-be traveller would need to present at the departure gate clear evidence of a booking at a government-approved managed isolation facility. Travellers would need to make their own bookings at those facilities. Returning Kiwis would have a voucher to offset some or all of the cost of managed isolation, depending on the facility they choose. Other travellers would need to pay the full cost of their managed isolation.

If public health officials considered it advisable, overseas visitors could be required to present a recent negative Covid-19 test prior to boarding their flight to New Zealand. Passengers on flights from risky locations could be required to remain masked at airports and while flying, to reduce the risk of transmission among passengers or between passengers and crew.

Because boarding would be allowed only after presenting a booking at an authorised managed isolation facility, the government would not be scrambling to provide arrivals with facilities. More importantly, because much of the cost of isolation would be borne by the travellers, their willingness to pay for travel on particular dates and to stay in particular facilities could help encourage more providers to enter the market.

On arrival in New Zealand, travellers from risky places would remain isolated from other travellers, clear Customs and proceed directly to their isolation facility using pre-planned and dedicated transport. If necessary, isolation facilities near the airport could temporarily hold international arrivals awaiting a transit flight to their full-term isolation destination.

It is easy to imagine, under this kind of arrangement, Queenstown hotels advertising themselves as luxury isolation facilities providing greater amenities, both for returning citizens wishing to pay a premium over the amount covered by the voucher, and for international arrivals. As facilities filled up for particular dates, prices would rise and encourage other potential providers to seek certification as a managed isolation facility.

Facility providers competing for visitors but subject to strict oversight regarding safety protocols would have a stronger incentive to create safe ways of providing amenities for visitors. For example, when Auckland's SO Hotel was trialling user-pays isolation it offered exercise facilities by splitting its gym equipment across seven rooms to ensure distancing, as well as a rooftop deck. Because guests

⁵⁰ Wilson et al, 2020, op cit.

⁵¹ On 1 July, Air New Zealand cancelled Auckland-Melbourne flights for two weeks due to a spike in COVID-19 numbers in Melbourne. See <https://www.tvnz.co.nz/one-news/new-zealand/air-nz-scraps-auckland-melbourne-flights-two-weeks-due-Covid-19-spike>

paid a premium, the hotel could afford the extensive hygiene protocols required between users of gym equipment.⁵² Facilities with extensive grounds could advertise the availability of those grounds which would be under supervision to ensure that guests did not mingle.

Because travellers would be required to present a booking at an isolation facility before being allowed to travel, no one would be surprised by isolation requirements. And since arrivals would have some choice about their isolation facility, and more control over the timing of their arrival, there would be less cause for grievance about the standard of the facility and the process.

This system would also scale with demand meaning more returning citizens and overseas visitors could be accommodated. Rather than requiring the Minister's approval for entry, those wishing to visit would only need to make the appropriate bookings.

Safer and stronger lifeboats

Shifting away from a system that allocates scarce spaces by Ministerial discretion, to one that allows entry whenever that entry is safe on user-pays arrangements, would allow the safe expansion of New Zealand's ability to accommodate arrivals while reducing the humanitarian burden and boosting the country's economic recovery.

Rafting up with other safe places such as the Covid-free Islands, Taiwan and potentially some Australian states, would help all members weather this storm. And building better systems for enabling more safe entry into the shared lifeboats would be transformational.

International students willing to spend a couple of weeks in managed isolation could take the place of other tourists in urban hospitality venues and in touring the country during semester breaks.⁵³

The opportunities extend well beyond export education. International film production has already looked to shift to New Zealand to avoid interruptions in filming. Other sectors for whom the costs of interruption and disruption outweigh the costs of distance could wish to relocate to New Zealand.

Individuals now working remotely in the US may also wish to relocate here, and to bring their jobs with them. Economist Erik Brynjolfsson and co-authors recently found that *half* of all workers employed in the US prior to Covid-19 are now working from home.⁵⁴ The total US workforce is about 160 million people. Many, particularly in the technology sector, may be able to work from New Zealand – and especially when the current US administration has turned decidedly hostile to technology workers in the US on H1-B visas. Rather than hiding under lockdown in the US, some American workers could enjoy everything New Zealand has to offer while continuing their work. They would not be competing with Kiwis for jobs. They would bring their jobs with them.⁵⁵ And the connections they make with local businesses would be of value long after the pandemic has passed.

⁵² See Dileepa Fonseka. <https://www.newsroom.co.nz/2020/06/22/1238727/how-user-pays-quarantine-could-work>

⁵³ Crampton, Eric. 2020. "Open for minds: export education and recovery". Available at <https://nzinitiative.org.nz/reports-and-media/reports/policy-point-open-for-minds-export-education-and-recovery/>

⁵⁴ Brynjolfsson, Erik, John Horton, Adam Ozimek et al. 2020. "COVID-19 and Remote Work: An Early Look at US Data." NBER Working Paper 27344. Survey conducted April 1-5 2020 and May 2-8, 2020. Paper available at <https://www.nber.org/papers/w27344.pdf>

⁵⁵ The bulk of the evidence suggests that immigrants do not take jobs away from the native-born in any case. But it is even more implausible that people coming here to continue working remotely for their foreign employer would be 'stealing' any local jobs. They would rather be helping to protect jobs in hospitality, in accommodation, and in the tourist sector. Most of them would wind up touring the country while here.

When *half* of the *entire* American workforce has shifted to remote work, only a tiny fraction would need to shift to New Zealand to effectively replace *the entirety* of New Zealand's lost international tourists.

In the year to September 2019, international guests spent just over 17 million nights in accommodation in New Zealand⁵⁶ – the equivalent of 46,575 people staying in the country for a year. If even one of every ten thousand remote workers in the US decided to work remotely from New Zealand, almost a fifth of New Zealand's lost tourists would be replaced. If one in two thousand joined us, international numbers would return close to normal rates. These people could work while in isolation and spend their time post-isolation anywhere with a decent broadband connection – and tour the country during any holidays. Each tech worker staying for a year or two might bring just a bit more to New Zealand than tourists coming in on package bus tours.

New Zealand's managed isolation facilities must be able to safely scale up to realise this potential. Scaling up without safety would be futile, but the opportunities in safely doing so are enormous.

Improving border protocols to allow for safe entry at scale would not only help those worst affected by the collective elimination efforts, but it would also open up opportunities that simply were not available in the pre-pandemic world. Rather than trying to estimate the extent of New Zealand's likely economic losses, the country could be looking at stronger economic opportunities. American and other workers work remotely from New Zealand and paying taxes on income earned from their foreign employers, could help in paying down the government debt incurred during lockdown.

New Zealand has long been a safe place in an increasingly maddening world. Now, it is among the safest lifeboats in treacherous seas. Rafting up with other safe places would make all those countries stronger. And outpacing Covid-19's economic tsunami requires all hands at oars. Allowing other countries to safely join the raft to help with the rowing would push everyone far beyond the wave.

Recommendations

The New Zealand Government should:

- Set a principle to allow safe entry into New Zealand;
- Recognise that entry from safe places by people who have not recently been to risky places is safe. Re-open the border to entry from Taiwan and the Covid-free Pacific Islands and assess whether individual Australian states could be considered safe;
- Support Pacific Island neighbours in ensuring safe external borders;
- Continue to assess the adequacy of safety protocols on flights to risky places and at airports handling passengers from risky places;
- Allow greater scaling-up of managed isolation by:
 - Allowing those arriving to take up a greater portion of the cost: full user-pays for non-citizens and a voucher-based co-payment scheme for returning residents and citizens;
 - Certifying facilities as authorised providers of managed isolation or quarantine

⁵⁶ Statistics New Zealand, Accommodation Survey September 2019. Table 2: Domestic and International Guest Nights. Sum of North Island International guest nights and South Island International guest nights for the year to September 2019.

services;

- Charging isolation facilities for the isolation management services provided by the government;
 - Allowing facilities to provide their own management services if they are able to credibly demonstrate the capability of doing so safely, but only under strict supervision and process auditing;
 - Requiring all arrivals book their own accommodation in authorised isolation facilities and provide proof of booking before boarding flights to New Zealand;
 - Training potential isolation management staff;
 - Charging isolation facilities for the isolation services provided by the government on a full cost-recovery basis;
- Layering additional safety protocols for non-citizens arriving from risky places to further reduce risk as numbers increase, such as post-isolation testing and daily health check-ins;
 - Consult with New Zealand’s epidemiological community over the medium term as both testing and app-based technologies develop to assess whether alternative sets of restrictions could reduce risk at a lower cost for travellers from less risky but not risk-free places.

ABOUT THE INITIATIVE

The New Zealand Initiative is an independent public policy think tank supported by chief executives of major New Zealand businesses. We believe in evidence-based policy and are committed to developing policies that work for all New Zealanders.

Views expressed are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of The New Zealand Initiative, its staff, advisors, members or officers.

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