

International Travel During Post-Peak COVID-19

HPSNZ Position Statement and Guidelines

Date: 31.7.20

Purpose

The purpose of this High Performance Sport NZ (HPSNZ) Position Statement is to:

- Facilitate informed discussion regarding international sporting travel during the COVID-19 pandemic
- Provide a framework for safe and healthy international sport related travel during the COVID-19 pandemic
- Establish HPSNZ guidelines relating to international sport related travel during the COVID-19 pandemic

COVID-19 Pandemic and International Travel

When considering international travel during the COVID-19 pandemic the following observations and assumptions have been made:

- There remains no vaccine or treatment available (when a vaccine or treatment is available, the international travel guidance will change)
- There is no guarantee that the pandemic will not fluctuate in severity/impact over months or years, both between and within countries (and it is not clear how individual countries will address this situation)
- HPSNZ will align with New Zealand Government travel and immigration regulations
- Sport related travel will not routinely be availed special consideration by government authorities (but where appropriate HPSNZ will advocate with and on behalf of Athletes and NSO's)
- HPSNZ has limited direct access to Government processes in formulating its travel policy
- Public health measures in each country will vary (and potentially change at short notice) and will determine entry and health support availability within each country
- Universal considerations that require constant attention include optimisation of hygiene strategies and health monitoring / management strategies
- Flight costs, availability and stability will remain uncertain in the medium term

Given these constraints and uncertainties, in order to establish a framework for considering international travel during the COVID-19 pandemic, three sequential scenario's have been considered:

- 1. COVID-19 Level One with Closed New Zealand Borders (as at July 1, 2020)**
- 2. Phased Re-opening of Borders**
- 3. Borders Open and Stable**

Given the uncertainty of the future pandemic realities, this document focuses on the current state, incorporating known information. A brief outline for potential future situations is provided but there remains significant uncertainty as to the reality and timelines for any of the observations made. Further information on the background to this position statement is available in Appendix One. Generic considerations for overseas travel are considered in Appendix Two.

1. COVID-19 Level One with Closed New Zealand Borders (as at July 1, 2020)

Current State

- Applying to all international destinations, the current New Zealand Government guidelines on international travel states:

“Do Not Travel overseas at this time. We currently advise that all New Zealanders do not travel overseas at this time due to the outbreak of COVID-19, associated health risks and widespread travel restrictions.”¹

- There is significant international variability in COVID-19 status, but most countries continue to have high rates of COVID-19 transmission.
- New Zealand focus remains on minimising COVID-19 cases and impact in New Zealand community.
- International travel is severely curtailed with restricted access to many countries and highly variable isolation/quarantine requirements.²
- International flight availability is limited, and travel related costs have significantly increased.
- Health and immigration requirements are significantly modified and fluid internationally.
- Some countries potentially requiring evidence of COVID-19 status prior to travel through a ‘pre-departure COVID-19 test’.³
- New Zealand borders remain closed to everyone except New Zealand citizens and other exceptional circumstances. All entrants to New Zealand must be isolated for a minimum of 14 days.

Current Border Regulations: Returning to New Zealand⁴

- Every traveller arriving into New Zealand on a flight which departs from another country after 23:59 on 9 April must go into one of two types of facilities for a minimum of 14 days.
- **If a traveller is symptomatic on arrival**, they will be placed in a quarantine facility (ie. unable to leave their room) for 14 days.⁵
- **If a traveller is not symptomatic on arrival**, they will be placed in an approved managed isolation facility for 14 days.
- Exemptions from isolation may be granted on compassionate or medical grounds. Exemptions are rare and High Performance Sport related considerations are not part of any current exemption process.

Sport Related International Travel Recommendations

- While New Zealand border restrictions require isolation or quarantine on return from international travel, individuals or teams are advised against international travel for competition or training.
- With travel insurance policies typically including a general exclusion for pandemic related costs (e.g. no funding available if “Your claim arises from, is related to or associated with an actual or likely epidemic or

¹ See SafeTravel NZ: <https://safetravel.govt.nz/covid-19-coronavirus#:~:text=We%20currently%20advise%20that,risks%20and%20widespread%20travel%20restrictions.&text=The%20options%20for%20New%20Zealanders,to%20New%20Zealand%20as%20planned.>

² See: For specific country entry requirements see: <https://www.iata.org/en/programs/covid-19-resources-guidelines/covid-gov-mitigation/?ordering=Alphabetical&search=>

³ See: <https://uniteforrecovery.govt.nz/travel-and-the-border/leaving-new-zealand/>

⁴ See: <https://www.health.govt.nz/our-work/diseases-and-conditions/covid-19-novel-coronavirus/covid-19-current-situation/covid-19-border-controls>

⁵ See: <https://www.health.govt.nz/our-work/diseases-and-conditions/covid-19-novel-coronavirus/covid-19-current-situation/covid-19-border-controls/covid-19-managed-isolation-and-quarantine>

pandemic or the threat of an epidemic or pandemic”), any international travel undertaken should have funding available for supporting COVID-19 related symptoms, hospitalisation, intensive care support and potential relocation. See Appendix Three for specific Emirates Airline COVID-19 Travel Insurance.

- Any quarantine requirements upon return may be at the expense of the individual or NSO.
- HPSNZ will not routinely support its staff travelling internationally for work purposes while New Zealand Government travel recommendations state: *‘Do Not Travel overseas at this time’*.

2. Phased Re-opening of Borders

Possible Requirements

Specific identified countries with low rates of transmission/case reporting.

Effective public health measures and reporting structures in relevant countries. New Zealand government has identified those countries as appropriate for travel, and do not require isolation or quarantine if well when returning.

New Zealand may open its borders to travellers from some countries (e.g. Australia, Pacific and other countries with low transmission rates), or returning New Zealanders from some countries. Access to New Zealand from some countries may not require isolation/quarantine, but this will vary by location and over time.

Significant travel related hygiene and monitoring requirements. Ongoing instability of returning isolation/quarantine requirements, variable flight availability and risk of rapidly changing environment internationally.

Potential for significant travel disruption if local or international situation changes.

Considerations:

- Availability of travel insurance that includes provision for supporting COVID-19 related symptoms, hospitalisation, intensive care support and potential relocation.
- Access to and quality of healthcare support at the intended location.
- Potential for rapid change in New Zealand and international travel accessibility, with the consequences of being ‘marooned’ in a foreign country.
- Individual health and risk factors for COVID-19.
- Funding for potential isolation / quarantine, should the border controls change.
- Current COVID-19 epidemiology in the intended location and all transit points.
- Current border controls and regulations in intended location

3. Borders Open and Stable

The majority of countries have open borders, COVID-19 transmission is controlled or manageable, flights have increased. Gradual normalisation of international travel, but with sustained changes in hygiene and health monitoring strategies.

Considerations:

- Implementation and normalisation of health and hygiene strategies

Frequently Asked Questions

1. Will HPSNZ establish a high-performance sport appropriate quarantine facility?

- Under the current national environment, HPSNZ will not be establishing a stand-alone isolation or quarantine facility for athletes and staff returning from overseas and requiring either isolation or quarantine.
- The operational and logistical requirements of establishing and maintaining a facility are considered beyond the capacity of HPSNZ to safely and effectively deliver.
- Where possible, assistance will be provided to optimise training capability (e.g. providing when possible portable training equipment) within existing isolation or quarantine facilities, however at the current time, sport specific training will likely be heavily compromised.

2. Will HPSNZ staff be available to travel internationally with NSO's or Athletes?

- The current government guidelines on international travel state "Do not travel: New Zealanders are advised not to travel overseas at this time".⁶
- Irrespective of individual countries opening their borders to New Zealanders, while this is the New Zealand government position on international travel, HPSNZ will not routinely support employee's or contractors to travel with NSO's or athletes overseas.
- Any change in travel advice status from the New Zealand Government will result in a review of this position.

3. Does HPSNZ Carded Athlete Insurance cover athletes for COVID-19 related expenses?

- Within New Zealand the acute care of COVID-19 related issues is managed within the public health care system, and will not be covered by athlete health insurance.
- Costs related to sport specific requirements relating to COVID-19 (e.g. cardiac evaluations) will be supported through the normal HPSNZ Performance Health processes.
- International travel is typically (but this may exclude some elements in Australia) not covered by Athlete Health Insurance and requires specific travel insurance.

4. Are any travel insurance companies offering travel insurance with COVID-19 related coverage (medical, flight changes, accommodation etc.)?

- The travel insurer who provides HPSNZ travel insurance to staff, has the following statement regarding COVID-19:

*"Policies and paid travel arrangements purchased after 23 Mar 2020 will not provide any cover for claims directly or indirectly arising from, relating to or in any way connected with COVID-19 (or any mutation or variation thereof or any related strain). We will not therefore cover claims relating to any inability to travel, any decision not to travel or any changes to travel plans, nor any medical or health related loss or expenses incurred, as a result of COVID-19."*⁷

- While not a comprehensive travel insurance policy, the Emirates Airline has recently (23 July 2020) released a **COVID-19 Emergency Assistance Related to COVID-19** (see Appendix Three).
- HPSNZ is not aware of any other companies that will provide travel insurance for issues relating to COVID-19.

⁶ See: <https://uniteforrecovery.govt.nz/travel-and-the-border/leaving-new-zealand/>

⁷ See: <https://www.chubbtravelinsurance.co.nz/>

5. Will HPSNZ Support be available to carded athletes who may become exposed to COVID-19 and its consequences while traveling overseas?

- HPSNZ APS will continue to be available to athletes who have decided to travel internationally, within the constraints of the New Zealand environment as described above and the limitations of the Performance Health and other APS Guidelines.
- Health and Mental wellbeing support will continue to be available to athletes via teleconferencing or other means as necessary, when and where possible and appropriate.
- Athletes with clinical suspicion or confirmed COVID-19 will be managed as per established clinical protocols, isolation and facility access standards.

6. Will HPSNZ mandate that carded athletes cannot travel overseas for sports training and/or competition during the current COVID-19 situation?

- Notwithstanding the current Government position on international travel, HPSNZ is not able to prevent New Zealand athletes / citizens travelling overseas.
- HPSNZ recommends athletes and NSOs take an informed position on international travel, and seriously evaluate and consider the health and financial consequences of a worst-case COVID-19 scenario.

Appendix One: Essential Background to International Travel Position Statement

COVID-19: Global Status

In late December 2019, a cluster of atypical pneumonia cases in Wuhan China resulted in the identification of novel coronavirus SARS-CoV-2 and a disease known as COVID-19.¹ The novel virus has spread rapidly across the globe, and continues to pose unique clinical and scientific challenges. Currently (July 2020), at a global level the number of new cases is increasing at a rate of more than 1 million cases per week. The situation across countries varies widely from being on the early phase of the pandemic wave with numbers continuing to increase, to a post-peak or recovery phase. Countries and regions have taken a broad range of approaches to managing public and personal health, fiscal and border control elements of COVID-19. Some countries in Europe, having recently suffered significantly from the impacts of COVID-19 are re-opening borders, society and tourism, despite ongoing (albeit reduced levels of) community transmission. Associated with this re-opening, several countries are starting to see a second 'wave' of COVID-19 infections. As countries rationalise the potentially conflicting imperatives of economic survival and recovery versus COVID-19 infection and death rates, it is possible that opportunities to travel internationally will gradually re-emerge.

COVID-19: New Zealand Status

New Zealand identified its first case of COVID-19 on 28 February, and the WHO declared a pandemic on 12 March 2020. By mid-March, all international arrivals in New Zealand were required to self-isolate, New Zealanders overseas were being encouraged to return home, and on 19 March New Zealand borders were closed to almost everyone except New Zealand citizens. The Government released a four-level public health strategy for managing the pandemic on 21 March and at midnight on 25 March, New Zealand entered a Level Four alert. This meant that other than essential workers, New Zealanders were required to 'stay at home', businesses were closed and exercise was limited to the home or immediate neighbourhood. With numbers of new COVID-19 cases peaking at the end of March, New Zealand gradually reduced restrictions by moving to Level three (April 27), Level Two (May 13), and Level One (June 8).

As a result of early border control and the implementation of clear public health strategies, New Zealand is in the relatively unique international situation of having a very low rate of COVID-19 within the country, with no evidence of any current community transmission. It remains unclear as to the approach the New Zealand Government will take to border control regulation that may facilitate the resumption of international travel. At the time of writing, the findings and recommendations of the trans-Tasman inter-governmental working group established to explore an approach to opening borders between Australia and New Zealand has not been published.

While the scientific understanding of COVID-19 continues to grow, there is to date no vaccination and no specific treatment available. It is hoped that a vaccine will be available for 2020, but there is no guarantee that this will be the case.

While the use of PCR testing for current COVID-19 cases in New Zealand remains high, there is currently no valid means in New Zealand of accessing whether individuals have either been infected with COVID-19 and/or if they have developed immunity.

COVID-19: Sport Impact

The cessation of national and international sport including the postponement of the 2020 Olympic Games during the pandemic has resulted in significant disruption to elite athletes training and competition schedules, as well as potential sources of income. Over recent weeks, international sporting federations, sports medicine practitioners and kindred organisations have begun to establish protocols, relevant for specific countries and sports during the pandemic, with a view to resuming local and international level sport during an ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.⁸ There remain many uncertainties as to the viability and long term impact of many of the international sport resumption plans.

⁸ See: <https://www.chubbtravelinsurance.co.nz/>

Irrespective of the current uncertainties, in the coming weeks and months, New Zealand Athletes will be hoping to travel overseas for international competitions, for both commercial and qualification imperatives. Technical support for athletes, including coaches and support staff employed or contracted by National Sporting Organisations (NSOs) and High Performance Sport New Zealand (HPSNZ), may also be expected to travel internationally to support athlete's preparation and competition strategies.

[tps://www.worldathletics.org/about-iaaf/health-science/risk-assessment](https://www.worldathletics.org/about-iaaf/health-science/risk-assessment)"
<https://www.worldathletics.org/about-iaaf/health-science/risk-assessment>; World Rugby:
<https://playerwelfare.worldrugby.org/covid-19>;

Appendix Two: General Travel Recommendations during the COVID-19 Pandemic

While it remains uncertain when it will happen, at some point it is anticipated that either individual athletes, campaigns or NSO's will begin to travel internationally to train and compete.

The following provides a series of recommendations for travel related decision making and preparation.

Preparing for Travel

NSOs should appoint a 'COVID-19 Officer' as the point of contact for all COVID-19 related matters. This individual has accountability and responsibility for addressing COVID-19 considerations.

Assess COVID-19 status and health requirements of transit and destination countries including⁹:

- NZ Government country specific travel recommendations¹⁰
- Travel controls at transit and destination points
- Public gathering restrictions and stay-at-home requirements at destination
- Local COVID-19 epidemiology at destination and transit
- Internal movement restrictions at destination and transit
- Pre-departure testing
- Arrival quarantine or isolation protocols at destination (and upon return to New Zealand)
- Specific health support available at destination
- Testing and contact tracing requirements at destination
- In-flight requirements (e.g. Face masks, physical distancing etc.)

In the 14 days immediately prior to travel:

- Education on the risks and health related strategies pertaining to COVID-19 should be provided in advance of travel, with all individuals having the opportunity to ask questions.
- Athletes/staff should be free from respiratory or other infectious symptoms.
- It is recommended that NSO's implement a process for daily symptom checks for these 14 days and during the entire period of travel.
- In the absence of any symptoms or COVID-19 contact in the 14 days preceding travel, COVID-19 testing immediately prior to travelling is not a routine requirement but may be required by some countries.
- Any individual who has been unwell during this period will require specific medical clearance in advance of departure. This may include the requirement for a pre-departure COVID-19 test.¹¹
- When medical resources are available, immediate pre-travel evaluations (i.e. brief symptom check, resting heart rate and temperature) of traveling individuals should also be considered.
- All individuals travelling should have a medical review prior to travel, to ensure any underlying risk factors for COVID-19 are identified and appropriately managed.
- All travelling individuals should have all required medications (and additional supplies) and health care requirements in their possession.
- All individuals should be encouraged to maintain a high level of hygiene and sanitation practices at all times.¹²

⁹ For high level international status reports see: <https://ourworldindata.org/policy-responses-covid#international-travel-controls>

¹⁰ See Safetravel: <https://www.safetravel.govt.nz/>

¹¹ See: <https://uniteforrecovery.govt.nz/travel-and-the-border/leaving-new-zealand/>

¹² See: Good Hygiene: <https://www.health.govt.nz/your-health/healthy-living/good-hygiene>; Hand washing: <https://www.health.govt.nz/your-health/healthy-living/good-hygiene/hand-washing>; Preventing Spread of Infections: <https://www.health.govt.nz/your-health/healthy-living/environmental-health/infectious-disease->

Isolation and Quarantine

New Zealand currently requires any individual entering New Zealand to be isolated (if well) or quarantined (if unwell) for a minimum of 14 days from arrival.

Internationally within destination countries, requirements vary and up-to-date information should be sourced from country specific government sources. The situation can change rapidly both in New Zealand and internationally – in preparation, scenario planning should incorporate a situation where unplanned isolation is required.

Travelling individuals will be answerable to and under the direction of the local public health authority – the New Zealand health policies will not apply.

Healthcare Availability and Reciprocal Health Care Agreements

New Zealand, the United Kingdom (UK) and Australia have reciprocal public health care agreements.¹³

This means that New Zealand citizens travelling to Australia and the UK are eligible for limited subsidised health services for medically necessary treatment. The reciprocal health care agreement covers treatment that is medically necessary prior to returning to the individual's home country.

For all other countries, the specifics of publicly available healthcare should be identified in advance, but comprehensive travel insurance is a recommended requirement (noting that COVID-19 related healthcare will in most cases not be covered by travel insurance).

It is recommended that irrespective of reciprocal health support, that when travelling during the COVID-19 pandemic, NSOs should plan where possible for medical support to accompany travelling athletes.

Available medical support may be restricted depending on the location of the training / competition venue.

Travel and Health Insurance

It is recommended that all individuals have a comprehensive travel insurance package.

Currently, travel insurers are not funding any COVID-19 related outcomes, and the implications of policy limitations must be reviewed and understood in advance of travel. See Appendix Three for information from Emirates Airline.

NSOs should ensure that the funding approach to any potential COVID-19 related health needs is clear, understood and appropriate for the specific pandemic situation. All travellers must have appropriate financial cover for potentially incurred medical expenses.

The support of existing Health Insurance policies (and their role in COVID-19 related health issues) should be clarified in advance of travel, with some insurers providing limited trans-Tasman cover.

HPSNZ Athlete Health insurance does not support COVID-19 related issues.

[prevention-and-control/prevent-spread-infectious-disease](#); WHO Hand Washing:

https://www.who.int/gpsc/clean_hands_protection/en/

¹³ See Reciprocal Health Agreements: <https://www.health.govt.nz/new-zealand-health-system/eligibility-publicly-funded-health-services/reciprocal-health-agreements#:~:text=Eligibility%20direction-Reciprocal%20health%20agreements,people%20covered%20by%20the%20agreements.>

Managing COVID-19 Suspect Cases

Strategies (including location of medical support) for managing 'unwell' athletes or staff, should be established and understood in advance of travel.

The respective COVID-19 processes of the relevant international health authorities should be reviewed by NSOs prior to planning travel.

Any athlete who develops symptoms consistent with COVID-19 will require medical evaluation.

Individuals who develop symptoms consistent with COVID-19 will be tested by local health authorities.

Individuals suspected to have COVID-19 will be subject to local quarantine rules and regulations until the testing result is known.

If an individual is confirmed as a positive COVID-19 case, all management protocols must be guided by local health authorities.

Following a COVID-19 test, individuals must not travel until the testing outcome is known, and they have been medically cleared to do so (either a team doctor or the local health authorities).

Individuals diagnosed with COVID-19 will require isolation, and will not be able to travel internationally (i.e. back to New Zealand or to another country) until they have adequately recovered and have been cleared for travel by the relevant (local and destination) public health authorities.

Appendix Three: Emirates Airlines Emergency Assistance Related to COVID-19

- On July 23 Emirates Airlines released a package of COVID-19 assistance at any time when flying between 23 July 2020 and 31 October 2020.¹⁴
- It is recommended that the full terms and conditions be carefully reviewed.
- Positive elements of this package include support of COVID-19 related healthcare up to a maximum, and assistance with repatriation as required.
- Of specific note for New Zealand travellers is the following exclusion to all Assistance Cover in the event that:

'your travel [is] against your home country's government advice or against local authority advice at your trip destination'

- Given the current New Zealand Travel Guidance, the Emirates Assistance does not appear to be applicable to New Zealanders travelling overseas at this time.

¹⁴ See: <https://www.emirates.com/nz/english/help/covid19-cover/>. For Terms and Conditions see: <https://c.ekstatic.net/ecl/documents/covid-19-cover-terms-and-conditions.pdf>.