



14 August 2020

Prime Minister Rt Hon Jacinda Ardern
Transport Minister Hon Phil Twyford
Health Minister Hon Chris Hipkins
Workplace Relations and Safety Minister Hon Andrew Little
Agriculture and Food Safety Minister Hon Damien O'Connor
Parliament Buildings
Wellington

Delivered via email

Dear Prime Minister and Ministers,

Re: Movement of road freight during Covid-19 level changes

Firstly, I would like to thank the Government for its prompt action in ensuring interregional travel for road freight services via the *Covid-19 Public Health Response (Alert Levels 3 and 2) Order 2020*, signed on 12 August 2020.

This was an important step in ensuring road freight transport operators could meet increased demand for goods, particularly in the Auckland region.

However, as we face uncertainty around level changes in the days and weeks ahead, I would like to make you aware of some points that the Road Transport Forum (RTF) believes need consideration in the decision-making process.

Hard borders in and out of regions present issues for the movement of freight. As we saw on the first day of the border setup in Auckland, trucks were backed up for kilometres and hours. This is particularly problematic for the busy and densely populated regions, such as Auckland, where large amounts of freight flow in, out, and through 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Long delays in traffic present a number of issues for the supply chain. These include:

- damage to perishable goods – including fresh food
- health and safety considerations for drivers who are restricted by the hours they can work – stuck in traffic they may get into a situation where they exceed the hours they are legally allowed to work, but of course they cannot abandon their truck and go home
- missing deadlines to ports and airports for exports and imports
- health and safety of livestock on the back of trucks.

Our members tell us that for drivers, the stress of not meeting delivery deadlines is a very big factor contributing to health and safety in the workplace. We are concerned that in these uncertain times when mental health issues are an increasing concern, that drivers are being put under undue pressure.

The whole country wants access to food and goods, but the health and wellbeing of truck drivers must be considered in meeting those demands. Truck drivers transport 93% of the total tonnes of freight moved in New Zealand. They work in all conditions and always come through in a crisis.

The RTF is asking you to consider all these factors when you make decisions about Covid-19 level changes. Where there are areas in New Zealand that might move to Level 3, there will be road borders enforced by Police and military personnel. We request that in all such areas, trucks are given a lane to move freely without being stopped and checked. This will be particularly important in regions where there are ports.

Thanks to co-operation from the Police and Auckland Transport, this has been able to be put in place in Auckland.

Should any parts of New Zealand be placed into a Level 4 lockdown, we hope that there have been lessons learned from the previous Level 4 lockdown. Freight cannot be categorised and separated; it all needs to move freely to ensure the supply chain works effectively and efficiently.

We understand the Government has many big decisions to make. However, we believe the movement of road freight is critical to both the health and wellbeing of our nation and any economic activity we can continue at this stage. We would ask that you consider the matters contained within this letter in your on-going decision making around how New Zealand manages Covid-19.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Nick Leggett". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Nick Leggett
Chief Executive
Road Transport Forum