



Cabinet

Minute of Decision

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COVID-19 Resurgence: Second Review of Alert Levels in Response to February Auckland Community Cases

Portfolio COVID-19 Response

On 22 February 2021, Cabinet:

Situation update

- 1 **noted** that one further community case (of a close contact) has been identified since 17 February 2021;
- 2 **noted** that on 21 February, 7,392 tests were undertaken in the previous 24 hours, bringing the weekly total of tests to more than 71,000;
- 3 **noted** that source investigation is continuing, however, no scenarios have yet been ruled out regarding source, with the possibility that a definitive source may not be found;
- 4 **noted** the Director-General of Health's updated advice:
 - 4.1 that the high number of negative tests across Auckland provides a high level of assurance that community transmission is not occurring;
 - 4.2 confirming that Auckland should move to Alert Level 1;
 - 4.3 that while face coverings are no longer required as part of the current outbreak controls, there is merit in retaining face coverings on public transport in Auckland and the rest of New Zealand as a precautionary measure and additional level of protection in that setting, in the event of any further outbreaks and community transmission;
- 5 **agreed** to move Auckland to Alert Level 1 and keep the rest of country at Alert Level 1 from 11:59 pm, Monday, 22 February 2021;

Measures at Alert Level 1

- 6 **agreed** that it would be an appropriate measure in response to the level of public health risk for the requirement for face coverings on public transport at Alert Level 1 to be continued for both Auckland and the rest of New Zealand;
- 7 **agreed** that the requirement for face coverings on public transport be reviewed on a regular basis, taking into account the progress of the vaccination programme and the risk of community transmission;

- 8 **agreed** that it would be an appropriate measure in response to the level of public health risk to retain the existing face covering exemptions (as provided in the current Order) for staff and passengers, food and drink, and the provision specifying that operators should support through education but are not required to enforce the requirement;
- 9 **authorised** the Minister for COVID-19 Response to take decisions on any further exemptions from the face covering requirement in respect of long haul inter-regional travel;
- 10 **noted** that officials will review the definition of public transport and the services that fall within this definition for the purposes of Alert Level Orders;
- 11 **noted** that the Minister for COVID-19 Response will report back to Cabinet with further advice on the issues concerning the options for improving record keeping and use of the NZ COVID Tracer App for contact tracing purposes;

Other matters

- 12 **invited** the Minister for Workplace Relations and Safety to report back to Cabinet on how the Workplace Relations Safety portfolio can support public health compliance activities, including on the use of the Health and Safety at Work Act 2015 and an appropriate role for WorkSafe;
- 13 **agreed** that Cabinet's decision in relation to the review of alert levels be communicated by the Prime Minister.

Michael Webster
Secretary of the Cabinet