

Office of the Minister for COVID-19 Response

Cabinet

COVID-19 RESPONSE: 30 AUGUST REVIEW OF ALERT LEVEL SETTINGS

Proposal

- 1 This paper seeks Cabinet's agreement to:
 - 1.0 keep Auckland at Alert Level 4 until at least 11.59pm, Tuesday 14 September
 - 1.1 keep Northland at Alert Level 4 until at least 11.59pm, Tuesday 7 September
 - 1.2 move all New Zealand below Auckland to Alert Level 3 from 11.59pm, Tuesday 31 August, and
 - 1.3 review these settings on Monday 6 September.

Relationship with Government priorities

- 2 This paper concerns the Government's response to COVID-19.

Summary

- 3 Since the first positive case on Tuesday 17 August 2021, the number of new cases has continued to increase. I signalled on Friday that if Alert Level 4 were having a significant impact on reducing transmission (i.e. comparable to Alert Level 4 in 2020), then modelling suggests that case numbers would peak and begin flattening over the weekend. As at 9am, Monday 30 August, there are 562 confirmed cases, all but 15 of which are in Auckland.
- 4 The proportion of cases who are household contacts of known cases has been increasing steadily and an increasing proportion of cases had no exposure events in the community while infectious.
- 5 Testing and contact tracing capability have expanded significantly. 259,218 tests were processed in the last seven days and there are no unexpected wastewater testing results to report. Contact tracing capacity is stretched but sufficient to manage the expected increase in daily cases.
- 6 In his interim public health advice, the Director-General of Health considers that the risk in Auckland and Northland remains high, with wider community transmission not ruled out. He considers the risk across the rest of New Zealand to be medium, and that the Wellington cluster is contained. He has made recommendations that align with this advice i.e. to keep Northland at Alert Level 4 for a further week, Auckland at Alert Level 4 for two weeks, and to move the rest of the country down to Alert Level 3, with a review on Monday 6 September.
- 7 On the basis of this advice, I propose that Cabinet agrees to:

- 7.0 Keep Auckland at Alert Level 4 until at least 11.59pm, Tuesday 14 September.
 - 7.1 Keep Northland at Alert Level 4 until at least 11.59pm, Tuesday 7 September, unless there is evidence to support a move to Alert Level 3 sooner. COVID-19 Group Ministers with power to act could be delegated this decision.
 - 7.2 Move all New Zealand south of Auckland to Alert Level 3 from 11.59pm, Tuesday 31 August.
- 8 It is important that when parts of the country are ready to move to Alert Level 3 sufficient time is allowed to implement a land-based Alert Level boundary so that it is safe, effective and achieves its purpose – to restrict movement to prevent the transmission of the virus. I am advised that work to implement the Alert Level 4/3 boundary is underway by Police and checkpoints will be established on Tuesday 31 August. Police will also support AVSEC in checks at airports. MBIE has activated the Business Travel Document register to support Police enforcement.
- 9 The impacts of higher Alert Levels intensify as the period these restrictions are in place endures. Although higher Alert Levels assist in preventing community transmission in more vulnerable communities, they disproportionately impact some groups.
- 10 Engagement with Northland leaders, including iwi, shows reduced support for Northland remaining at Alert Level 4 especially considering no known community transmission there. They also reported declining resilience in some Māori communities and increasing demand for food and housing support.
- 11 There are issues that will require further work ahead of the next Alert Level review on Monday 6 September. These include preparation for multiple Alert Level boundaries (4/3/2), monitoring compliance at checkpoints and airports, considering further protocols for those who travel between Alert Level areas, and considering strengthening workplace protocols at Alert Levels 4 and 3.

How we make Alert Level decisions

- 12 Cabinet has previously agreed to use eight factors to guide decisions on the appropriate Alert Level settings for New Zealand [CAB-20-MIN-0199; CAB-20-MIN-0387 refer]:
- 12.0 the Director-General of Health's satisfaction on four health matters:
 - 12.0.0 the source of the case(s) or outbreak (noting new variants of concern), and the number and geographical distribution of clusters;
 - 12.0.1 the length of time the virus has been in the community and the potential for undetected transmission (i.e. between the source and the case);

- 12.0.2 the containment of the case(s) and/or cluster(s), including consideration of the potential for undetected community transmission occurring in New Zealand or in quarantine-free travel countries;
 - 12.0.3 the capacity and capability of our public health systems, including our surveillance and contact tracing systems;
 - 12.1 evidence of the effects of the measures on the economy and society more broadly;
 - 12.2 evidence of the impacts of the measures for at risk populations in particular;
 - 12.3 public attitudes towards the measures and the extent to which people and businesses understand, accept, and abide by them; and
 - 12.4 our ability to operationalise the restrictions, including satisfactory implementation planning.
- 13 This approach is underpinned by the Elimination Strategy and supports New Zealand's vaccine roll-out, which in turn will support the Reconnecting New Zealanders approach to opening our borders next year when it is safe to do so.

The current response

- 14 At 11.59pm, Tuesday 17 August 2021, all New Zealand moved to Alert Level 4 [CAB-21-MIN-0324 refers].
- 15 On Friday 20 August, Cabinet agreed to keep all New Zealand at Alert Level 4 until at least 11.59pm, Tuesday 24 August [CAB-21-MIN-0330 refers].
- 16 On Monday 23 August, Cabinet agreed to extend Alert Level 4 for Auckland until 11.59 pm, Tuesday, 31 August, and agreed to extend Alert Level 4 for the rest of New Zealand until 11.59 pm, Friday, 27 August [CAB-21-MIN-0336 refers].
- 17 On Friday 27 August, Cabinet agreed to keep all New Zealand at Alert Level 4 until at least 11.59pm, Tuesday, 31 August 2021. Cabinet noted that it is anticipated that all of New Zealand, except Auckland and Northland, will move down to Alert Level 3 for at least one week from 11.59pm, Tuesday 31 August 2021, should the public health risk advice support this [CAB-21-MIN-0344 refers]. At Friday's post-Cabinet media briefing, the Prime Minister signalled that Auckland is expected to remain at Alert Level 4 for a further two weeks, subject to public health advice.

Situation report

- 18 As at 9am Monday 30 August, there are 562 confirmed cases. 547 are in Auckland and 15 in Wellington. All except one of the new positive cases since Cabinet's review of Alert Level settings on Friday have been in Auckland. The new Wellington case was already in a MIQF as a household contact of an existing case.

- 19 The outbreak is continuing to grow in Auckland, and it is difficult to determine whether the number of cases have peaked but the numbers are not increasing exponentially. However, the following trends across the country are encouraging:
- 19.0 the proportion of cases who are household contacts of known cases has been steadily increasing since 23 August,
 - 19.1 in the 24 hours to 9am 28 August, over 70 percent of cases had no exposure events in the community while infectious,
 - 19.2 there has been a decreasing number of new exposure events created by new cases since 17 August,
 - 19.3 there has been a decreasing number of contacts whose exposure date was in the last seven days,
 - 19.4 in the Auckland region 99 percent of contacts have been reached and 90 percent have had at least one test, and
 - 19.5 in Northland, 100 percent of contacts have been reached and 89 percent have had at least one test.
- 20 The Director-General has identified the need for vigilance to prevent transmission between essential workers. As at 2pm, Sunday 29 August 95 cases are essential workers, and while many of these are incidental (i.e. they were not infected at work but as part of community clusters), further analysis is needed. In the meantime permitted essential movement and business activities should remain limited to work critical for life necessities, and the Director-General suggests reiterating communications messages around the importance of all essential workers continuing to follow strict Infection Prevention and Control processes (e.g. wear PPE, practice physical distancing, cough and hand hygiene etc).

Updated modelling in relation to the current outbreak

- 21 Modelling results are broadly similar to the update provided in the previous Alert Level Review Cabinet Paper on Friday:
- 21.0 *Size of cluster at detection:* Estimates for the size of the cluster at the point of detection suggest that there may have been up to 250 - 300 infected individuals. This is a large estimated range, reflective of the uncertainty in estimating transmission when there are low numbers of cases.
 - 21.1 *Impacts of Alert Level 4:* While it is still too early to accurately estimate the impacts of Alert Level 4 on transmission – in particular, whether the reproductive number in Alert Level 4 is just above or just below 1 – there are positive indications. The following discussion is therefore indicative at this stage. If Alert Level 4 restrictions, contact tracing, and case management measures are reducing transmission similarly to the 2020 Alert Level 4, modelling results suggest that daily reported cases will begin to flatten and taper over the course of this week.

- 21.2 At this early stage, it is difficult to estimate when new cases may reduce below ten per day, with modelling results giving a range from mid-September to mid-October. In a more pessimistic scenario where Alert Level 4 is insufficient to reduce the reproductive number below one, modelled case numbers are not likely to dramatically reduce in the near-term.
- 21.3 As more data for transmission during Alert Level 4 becomes available, modelling results will give a better sense of how the transmission dynamics of this cluster may evolve in different scenarios.
- 21.4 *Chance of undetected cases outside of Auckland:* Estimates for the probability that we would have detected any new cases (if they existed) outside of Auckland and Wellington through wastewater and community testing suggest that there is around a 60-70% chance that cases are detected, or transmission “fizzles out”, by today (Monday 30 August). These estimates are sensitive to the catchment area of wastewater surveillance and the proportion of the symptomatic population being tested (where smaller, and higher, respectively, improve probability of detection).

Director-General of Health’s interim assessment against the health factors

Source of the case(s)/outbreak

- 22 Source investigation is ongoing into direct link(s) between the source case and the community cluster, however the chain of transmission that was considered to be most likely (via a MIQ worker who was briefly present on the same floor as the returnee who is considered the source case in the Crowne Plaza on 8 August 2021) has now been ruled out. All the available evidence points towards this source case but the exact chain of transmission has not been established and may never be.

Update on outbreak sub-clusters

- 23 There are currently seven epidemiologically-linked sub-clusters identified within this outbreak. As at 2pm 29 August, the two largest clusters are:
- 23.0 a cluster associated with the AOG church in Mangere (261 confirmed cases), and
- 23.1 the Birkdale Social Network cluster associated with Case A (73 confirmed cases).
- 24 The other clusters have 30 or fewer people associated with each of them.

Length of time the virus has been in the community

- 25 The initial detection of the outbreak discussed at paragraph 22 above was a positive result on 17 August. This suggests that the virus was circulating in the community for a period of at least ten days prior to detection.

Potential for undetected community transmission

- 26 The Director-General considers that the risk in Auckland and Northland remains high, with wider community transmission not ruled out. However, he considers the risk across the rest of New Zealand to be medium and has a high degree of confidence that the cluster in Wellington is contained. After the index cases in Wellington were identified, all subsequent cases south of Auckland have been identified in close plus contacts (10) and in two close contacts. All recent cases have been in quarantine, including the most recent case detected on Saturday 28 August. The last time a case was infectious in the community was Friday 20 August.
- 27 In the Auckland region, the large part of ongoing transmission is within households. However, there is evidence of transmission from locations of interest. There are a number of essential workers who are infected (95 cases as at 2pm, Sunday 29 August), who may be attending work during their infectious period. The Director-General does not at this stage have confidence that the edges of the outbreak have been detected.

Health system capacity including surveillance and contact tracing systems

- 28 As at 29 August, there were 35 hospitalised cases, with three in intensive care.
- 29 The Ministry of Health's National PPE and Critical Medical Supply Chain has good stocks of PPE, with at least a month's reserves to meet high pandemic demand. In addition, the Ministry continues to confirm orders and receive shipments of more PPE every week. While there are freight delays that are currently being widely reported, the Ministry is working with government partners to minimise impact from this.
- 30 Since Tuesday 17 August 2021, over 34 million items of PPE have been distributed for use in the health and disability sector. PPE demand is expected to drop back over the next week as it is expected that initial demand involved a lot of over-ordering.
- 31 The Ministry's national PPE supply chain currently holds close to 17 million N95/P2 particulate respirators, 274 million medical masks, 16 million isolation gowns, 1.5 million face shields, 271 million nitrile gloves, and good volumes of hand sanitiser, disinfectant wipes and other items of PPE utilised across the health and disability sector.
- 32 The total number of tests processed over the last seven days was 259,218 (a rolling 7-day average of 37,031 per day). Of the 514 South Island contacts identified as at 4pm Sunday 29 August, 100% have been contacted and are self-isolating. Of these 514 contacts, 476 (92%) test results have been returned, all of which have been negative (33 results are overdue). Of the 3,355 contacts identified in relation to community cases in the Wellington region, 2,812 (83%) have been contacted and are self-isolating. Of these 3,355 contacts, 3,088 (92%) test results have been returned, with 12 positives (0.4%) and 3,076 (91%) negative (213 results are overdue).

- 33 There are no unexpected wastewater detections to report. A positive result was detected in a single point-in-time 'grab' sample from Warkworth on 27 August, after wastewater detections on 17, 22, and 24 August. Following the detection of COVID-19 in samples collected from Christchurch on 21, 23, and 25 August (likely linked to contained cases in managed isolation), grab samples were collected from 5 pumpstations on 26 August. COVID-19 was not detected in any of those samples.
- 34 As at 5.30pm Sunday 29 August, 33,365 contacts have been identified. Of these 33,365 contacts, 27,333 (81%) have been contacted and are self-isolating; 28,648 (85%) have returned test results, with 343 (1%) of these being positive and 28,305 (84%) being negative. Of these 33,365 contacts, 842 are close plus contacts. Of these 842 close plus contacts, 745 (88%) have been contacted and 638 (75%) have returned test results – 226 (26.8%) positive and 412 (48%) negative.
- 35 Contact tracing capacity is sufficient to manage the expected increase in daily cases. NITC has activated all the surge capacity from PHUs across the country to manage cases and contacts. Surge capacity in call centres has been activated and additional capacity has been activated through all of government call centres and an additional private provider. As at 29 August, there is capacity across the whole system. Although we are still seeing around 1,000 new contacts being identified per day, the number of new contacts identified is reducing as the impacts of Alert Level 4 take effect.
- 36 As at 29 August 2021, there are 3,101,884 registered NZ COVID Tracer app users, and 669,537 scans in the previous 24 hours. As at 30 August 2021, 1,939,501 people had Bluetooth tracing activated.

Director-General's conclusions

- 37 The Director-General considers that, although the number of new cases in Auckland continues to increase slowly, growth is not exponential and appears likely to plateau in the next 4-5 days. The proportion of cases identified as household links is increasing, but cases from community contacts remain.
- 38 There is evidence of transmission between essential workers in Auckland in some cases, suggesting that essential movement should still be limited.
- 39 Before considering recommending that Auckland move to Alert Level 3 the Director-General will consider testing numbers, wastewater results, and confirmation that known and emerging cases have been isolating.
- 40 Despite no cases being detected in Northland, concerns remain about the workplace contacts of the Warkworth household cases. Before considering recommending that Northland move to Alert Level 3 the Director-General would need more information to determine that community transmission is not occurring, particularly on contact tracing for the Warkworth cluster and wastewater testing results.
- 41 The Director-General considers the Wellington cluster to be contained, with all cases linked, and none infectious in the community since 20 August.

Proposal

- 42 The Director-General's interim public health advice is therefore that:
- 42.0 Auckland remain at Alert Level 4 for at least two further weeks, with a review on 5 September 2021, for Cabinet consideration on 6 September 2021;
 - 42.1 Northland remain at Alert Level 4, to be reviewed on 5 September for Cabinet consideration on 6 September 2021, with a view to move to Alert Level 3, unless evidence (including contact tracing for the Warkworth cluster and wastewater testing results) emerges to enable an earlier move; and
 - 42.2 The rest of New Zealand shift to Alert Level 3 at 11:59pm on Tuesday 31 August 2021, with a review on 5 September, for Cabinet consideration on 6 September 2021.
- 43 On the basis of the most recent public health risk assessment, the Director-General considers that the risk in Auckland and Northland remains high. He advises that given the information and test results received to date, and the current sub-cluster in Warkworth, wider community transmission cannot be ruled out in Auckland or Northland. At this point, the data suggest that at least another two weeks is required at Alert Level 4 in Auckland to be confident that the outbreak is contained. Further testing and continued negative results in wastewater samples in Warkworth and in Northland are needed to be more certain that there is no undetected community transmission in Northland.
- 44 The Director-General considers the risk across the rest of New Zealand to be medium. There is no indication of any transmission outside of Auckland and Wellington. While cases continue to grow, all but one of the recent cases (an individual who tested positive while in isolation in Wellington) are located in Auckland. Officials have gathered a reasonable level of evidence regarding the parameters of this outbreak, and I have confidence that the outbreak is largely contained outside of Auckland.
- 45 Therefore, I propose that Cabinet agrees to keep Northland at Alert Level 4 until at least 11.59pm, Tuesday 7 September and Auckland at Alert Level 4 until at least 11.59pm, Tuesday 14 September. As indicated on Friday 27 August, I recommend Cabinet agrees to move all New Zealand south of Auckland to Alert Level 3 from 11.59pm, Tuesday 31 August. I propose these settings are all reviewed on Monday, 6 September.
- 46 There is also an option to move Northland to Alert Level 3 before Tuesday 7 September, if the public health advice supports this. Planning to implement the Alert Level 4/3 boundary has considered this possibility and although a boundary north of Auckland would require additional Police checkpoints and resource, it could be implemented within 24 hours of today's decision. Cabinet could delegate COVID-19 Group Ministers authority to agree to shift Northland out of Alert 4 sooner, subject to updated public health advice and further wastewater and community testing over the coming days.

Assessment of the proposed measures/options against the non-health factors

- 47 I have assessed the proposal to keep Auckland and Northland at Alert Level 4 and move the rest of the country to Alert Level 3, against the non-health factors agreed by Cabinet, as set out below.
- 48 My assessment confirms my proposal. We knew the negative impacts of higher Alert Levels would be exacerbated as the length of time the restrictions are in place endures. Social and community based services are working hard to keep up with demand, but I remain concerned about increasing mental wellbeing impacts, reports of discrimination and demand on essential supplies (e.g. food and shelter). Significant Police resource will be required to enforce the Alert Level 4/3 boundary and to manage the expected influx of people on the roads and at stores following a move to Alert Level 3. Increased compliance monitoring may lead to a spike in the number of non-compliance notifications over the coming week.

Economic impacts from Alert Levels

- 49 The Treasury's assessment of the economic impacts of different Alert Level settings was provided in the Alert Level review Cabinet Paper of Friday 27 August. Domestic and international economic data since the emergence of the pandemic continues to back our strategy that a strong public health response has been the best economic response.

Impacts on at risk populations

50. The impacts of higher Alert Levels (Alert Levels 3 and 4) intensify as the period these restrictions are in place endures. Although higher Alert Levels assist in preventing community transmission in more vulnerable communities, they disproportionately impact some groups. The impacts on at risk populations are set out in more detail in Appendix 2, and include (but are not limited to):
- 50.1 restrictions on earning capacity (e.g. loss of jobs, reduced hours, and the impact of finances of families) which can amplify income and poverty inequities;
 - 50.2 concerns around vaccination eligibility (e.g. large proportions of some populations only recently becoming eligible) and inequitable access to testing stations;
 - 50.3 challenges associated with digital connectedness, and inequitable access to essential
 - 50.4 services and material essentials such as food, hygiene products, shelter and warmth.
 - 50.5 ongoing concerns around mental health, with support services experiencing a significant surge in support being sought by communities in relation to their mental and general wellbeing;

- 50.6 Increased racial discrimination, particularly heightened toward Pacific peoples due to increasing Pacific cases and Alert Level extensions; and
 - 50.7 challenges self-isolating, particularly for larger intergenerational families.
- 51 MSD, NEMA and social service providers will continue to work with communities and provide consistent messaging about the supports already in place and how to utilise existing support channels.

Public attitudes and compliance

- 52 Themes emerging through public social media channels, including Unite Against COVID-19, on Friday 27 August include more conversation about the duration of Alert Level settings, with high neutral and negative sentiment around duration of settings (particularly in the South Island). People displaced by the original lockdown on 17 August are eager to return home and believe they will be able to do so from Wednesday. Sentiment in the enforcement category is still mainly neutral, with moderate negative sentiment related to increased concern about enforcement of Alert Level boundaries.
- 53 Engagement (including some on Friday, following the most recent Alert Level announcements) with local Northland leaders, including iwi, on proposals to keep Northland at Alert Level 4 with Auckland, has demonstrated:
- 53.0 reduced support for Northland being at the same Alert Level as Auckland, with some more concerned about Northland remaining at Alert Level 4 especially considering no known community transmission there;
 - 53.1 clear emphasis on communicating the public health rationale for higher Alert Level restrictions;
 - 53.2 general support for the northern and southern boundary definition;
 - 53.3 declining resilience in some Māori communities;
 - 53.4 increasing demand for food and housing support.
- 54 By 5pm Saturday, 28 August, Police had received a total of 11,816 online breach notifications through its 105 system (an increase of 1,844 notifications since Thursday 26 August), with 3,997 relating to breaches in Auckland. Since 17 August Police have conducted 39,296 COVID-19 related activities and issued 1,829 infringements (the majority for people failing to remain at home). There are continued reports of protests, with a handful planned on 31 August. Police advise that public sentiment is mixed following Friday's Alert Level announcement, with some (particularly in the South Island) disappointed with the decision to keep the country at Alert Level 4 and others defending this decision.
- 55 In line with predictions based on experience from the 2020 lockdown, there was some non-compliance with mass gatherings observed over the weekend, and this is expected to increase when parts of the country move to Alert Level 3. Police have increased their presence in Northland and Auckland as it is

anticipated people will attempt to leave these areas prior to Alert Level 4/3 boundary checkpoints being established.

Ability to operationalise the proposals in this paper

56. There are a number of operational implications of keeping some parts of the country at Alert Level 4, and moving the rest of the country to Alert Level 3. These include:
- 56.1. Implementation of the Alert Level 4/3 boundary (discussed below in paragraphs 63-66).
 - 56.2. Continued social and community-based support provisions, particularly as demand rises while lockdown restrictions continue. Officials advise that social and community-based services will continue to provide support to New Zealanders, including for housing, support for disabled people to maintain critical wellbeing and crisis support for people who are unsafe. Various economic supports (such as the Wage Subsidy and Resurgence Support Payment) also continue to be available.
 - 56.3. Monitoring compliance of permissions to travel at airports. Aviation Security (who are not enforcement officers) are undertaking checks at main airport entryways, or before departure gates. Police will provide reassurance patrols and respond to any calls for support in dealing with disturbances or instances of non-compliance.
 - 56.4. The Ministry of Health is receiving and processing several hundred requests a day for exemptions from the Alert Level 4 Order. These exemptions are being sought for a variety of reasons including moving house, visiting relatives, care for animals and attending funerals. We are also seeing a significant number of requests from people who sheltered in place during Alert Level 4 who wish to return home for reasons such as financial hardship, mental wellbeing, and reuniting with their families.

Alert Level 4/3 boundary and permitted purposes for travel

- 57 To implement a regional boundary around Auckland and Northland, I propose that the southern Alert Level 3/2 boundary used in February 2021 (including Port Waikato and parts of the northern Waikato) be used again for the Alert Level 4/3 boundary. A map of this area is attached in Appendix 1.

An Alert Level 4/3 boundary should restrict movement as much as possible

- 58 The fundamental public health premise is that under both Alert Levels 3 and 4, people should stay home, unless it is essential to do otherwise. At higher Alert Levels, travel between Alert Level areas creates an even greater risk of the virus spreading to other regions. An Alert Level 4/3 boundary should therefore be tighter, in terms of permitted movement, than previous boundaries created.

Cabinet has agreed to the permissions for movement across the Alert Level 4/3 boundary for work and non-work purposes

- 59 On Friday 27 August, Cabinet agreed to the permissions for movement across the Alert Level 4/3 boundary for work and non-work purposes [CAB-21-MIN-0344 refers]. It was agreed that the same categories of workers that can travel within the current Alert Level 4 area will be permitted to move from one Alert Level area to another. Cabinet also agreed to a limited number of permissions for individuals to cross the boundary for non-work purposes, for example to provide urgent care for a child or attend a medical appointment.
- 60 In addition to these permissions, exemptions for travel across the Alert Level 4/3 boundary can also be granted by the Director-General of Health of Health (including for compassionate reasons). Appendix 3 outlines the work and non-work permissions agreed by Cabinet in further detail.
- 61 In practice, these decisions mean that travel through different Alert Levels will be allowed if the person is travelling to undertake essential personal movement permitted by the Order (e.g. to do necessary work), or because they have received an exemption from the Order's restrictions on movement from the Director-General of Health (e.g. on compassionate grounds). The person travelling through different Alert Levels will, so far as is reasonably practicable, be required to travel directly without stopping. There will not be a specified "corridor" limiting the person's travel to a particular route.
- 62 Given the level of transmission we are seeing between essential workers, it is important that the vaccination is made available to these workers and additional tests are implemented where these workers are moving across the Alert Level 4/3 boundary. Employees of Alert Level 4 businesses and services who interact with customers, as well as transport and logistic services, are now eligible to receive the COVID-19 vaccine as soon as possible. DHBs are working directly with employers of these workers to organise vaccinations e.g. providing booking access codes for essential workers in larger workplaces to give these workers preferential access to DHB reserve lists. Other Alert Level 4 business and service employees are being prioritised.
- 63 I am advised that officials are also assessing the risk associated with Alert Level 4 businesses and services who regularly traverse the country as part of our supply chain (including long-haul truck drivers), in light of Delta. Officials are considering whether any additional risk mitigation measures are recommended, in addition to the protections already provided by Alert Level 4 and 3 face covering, physical distancing and personal movement requirements.

Business Travel Documents can support Police enforcement at checkpoints

- 64 The Order specifies when people are required to carry evidence of the purpose of their travel from one Alert Level Area to another, including for work.

- 65 MBIE has activated the Business Travel Document (BTD) register to support Police enforcement of the requirement for evidence at the Alert Level 4/3 boundary for businesses or services where travel across the boundary is permitted. This system significantly increases the efficient management of vehicles through checkpoints.
- 66 As at 8pm Sunday 29 August, 818 companies had been issued Business Travel Documents, enabling 5,021 to cross the Alert Level 4/3 boundary. Transport (1,830 workers) and Primary Sector (1,447 workers) documents currently make up the largest shares of issuance.
- 67 MBIE has confirmed that the BTD system will continue to auto-process most requests under an Alert Level 4/3 boundary. To mitigate the risk of BTDs being issued to businesses whose workers should not be travelling, sector lead agencies will increase their monitoring activities.

Implementation of an Alert Level 4/3 boundary

- 68 Police is working to implement the Alert Level 4/3 boundary south of Auckland. The Alert Level 4/3 boundary requires checkpoints to be established at five fixed locations, with one roving checkpoint team, to cover the rural areas in the west for the southern boundary. If a boundary were established to the north of Auckland, a further five fixed checkpoint locations would be required.
- 69 Police estimates 24/7 coverage will require 210 staff for the southern boundary (and 150 staff for a potential northern boundary), assuming 50 NZDF staff are available over each 24-hour period, confirmation of which will be received from NZDF this afternoon (30 August). As checkpoints are established, Police intends to work with Iwi to establish a partnership approach to their ongoing operation. Police note that the proposed permissions for cross-boundary travel across an Alert Level 4/3 boundary will result in lower traffic flows than previous Alert Level 3/2 boundaries.
- 70 Since Friday 27 August, Police has stepped up the establishment of checkpoints around the country to minimise unauthorised travel. Generally, compliance is good. Early anecdotal evidence suggests the most common reason to travel without authority is for shopping, sometimes to avoid busy local supermarkets.
- 71 Police will establish the southern boundary checkpoints during daylight hours on Tuesday 31 August for safety reasons and to minimise any final movement of people from Auckland and Northland to lower Alert Level areas in the final hours prior to the Order coming into force. These will be regular Alert Level 4 checkpoints until 11.59pm when the boundary becomes lawful. From that point, evidence of authorisation to travel will be checked.

Alert Level 3 settings

- 72 As indicated on Friday 27 August, Alert Level 3 settings continue to be largely fit for purpose for the Delta variant. Cabinet has agreed to the following minor settings adjustments [CAB-21-MIN-0344 refers]:

- 72.0 the public health risk description of Alert Level 3 will be changed to better reflect the situation that merits a step-down to Alert Level 3, to “Medium risk of community transmission – active but managed clusters”.
 - 72.1 The mandatory face covering requirements will be extended to include delivery drivers going to residential addresses.
 - 72.2 Classroom bubble sizes will be reduced to 10 people, which is consistent with limits on gatherings at Alert Level 3.
- 73 The mandatory record keeping obligations Cabinet has previously agreed to [CAB-21-MIN-0315 and CAB-21-MIN-0330] will be included in the Order moving any part of New Zealand to a lower Alert Level. Obligations will come into force seven days after the Order’s commencement.

Further work required ahead of next Alert Level review

- 74 Following decisions made as a result of this paper, there are issues that will require further work ahead of the next Alert Level review on Monday 6 September. These are:
- 74.0 DPMC’s COVID-19 Response Unit will co-ordinate the preparation for a possible Alert Level 4 and Alert Level 2 boundary (or a combination Alert Level 4/3/2 set of boundaries), including how this could be operationalised, what public health measures would be required, and how compliance could be supported.
 - 74.1 The Ministry of Health will co-ordinate the consideration of whether additional protocols, such as increased testing, are needed for those required to travel from a higher Alert Level area to a lower Alert Level area for permitted business purposes (Health, Transport, MBIE and DPMC). There have already been some discussions around this.
 - 74.2 Police will co-ordinate the monitoring of compliance with boundary requirements (if established) including at airports, and liaise with DPMC to assess the need for any change to settings (Police, MBIE, Transport, MPI and DPMC).
 - 74.3 The Ministry of Health will confirm whether infection prevention controls for businesses and services operating at Alert Levels 4 and 3 adequately reflect the risks of Delta (Health, MBIE and DPMC).
 - 74.4 The Ministry of Health will co-ordinate reviewing Alert Level 2 settings to reflect the risks of Delta, similar to the approach already taken to Alert Levels 4 and 3.
 - 74.5 DPMC will co-ordinate looking at options for tightening Alert Level 4 settings and other measures to help reduce transmission further, without causing further economic disruption and undermining compliance, should evidence show changes are required.

Economic support measures

- 75 The Ministry of Social Development, in collaboration with other social agencies and NEMA, advise they are continuing to monitor the social impacts of any change in Alert Levels, and any additional support that might be required for people and communities.
- 76 The Wage Subsidy Scheme August 2021 has had strong uptake with \$811.648 million paid as at 27 August, supporting 723,417 jobs. Applications to date have been almost entirely from businesses with under 500 employees. Provisional data shows the number of people on a main benefit increased by 7,086 in the two weeks to 27 August and further increases are likely. Food grants also increased significantly compared to the week before lockdown, reflecting people's need to access food, especially in Auckland.

Financial Implications

- 77 On 18 August 2021, Delegated Ministers agreed to activate both the Resurgence Support Payment (RSPAUG21) and Wage Subsidy Scheme (WSSAUG21). The tables below provide a high-level estimate for the costs of the schemes under two Alert Level scenarios.¹ Keeping Alert Level 4 restrictions in place for longer will increase uptake, with costs more likely to be in the higher end of the ranges presented.

Approximate WSS and RSP costs in different Alert Level scenarios

Scenario	WSS	RSP ²	Total
AL4 in Auckland, AL3 across rest of NZ – 2 weeks	\$1,200 to \$1,300 million	\$300 to \$400 million	\$1,500 to \$1,700 million
AL4 across all of NZ – 2 weeks	\$1,800 to \$2,100 million	\$400 to \$800 million	\$2,200 to \$2,900 million

WSSAUG21 and RSPAUG21 actual costs and appropriation balances

	WSSAUG21	RSPAUG21
Payments made at 27 August ³	\$812 million	\$277 million
Amount remaining in appropriations at 27 August	\$1,260 million	\$623 million

Wage Subsidy Scheme August 2021

- 78 The first payment under the WSSAUG21 closes for applications at 11:59pm, Thursday 2 September. The Alert Level decision taken by Cabinet on 27 August [CAB-21-MIN-0344 refers] has triggered a second payment for the WSSAUG21. The second payment opens at 9:00am, Friday 3 September and closes at 11:59pm, 16 September [CAB-21-MIN-0346 refers]. The cost of the

¹ Note while uptake of the WSS and RSP is expected to be highest in areas under Alert Level 4, firms in areas under Alert Level 3 are also able to access both schemes.

² Officials expect most of the RSP's uptake to be realised in the first 10 days of a lockdown. Any lockdown of 10 or more days is therefore likely to have costs at the higher end of our estimates.

³ Note the \$812 million represents actual payments made. It does not represent the value of actual applications made due to the lag in processing time.

second payment is expected to be less than the first payment as a result of the change in Alert levels (see the first scenario in the cost table above).

- 79 Cabinet has delegated authority to Joint Ministers to draw down up to \$2,200 million from the COVID-19 Response and Recovery Fund for future payments under the WSSAUG21 [CAB-21-MIN-0328 refers]. As at 28 August, the balance of the COVID-19 Response and Recovery Fund (CRRF) is \$2.8 billion.⁴

Resurgence Support Payment August 2021

- 80 Under initial Alert Level scenarios and associated estimated uptake, the RSPAUG21 was estimated to cost \$600 million, though officials recognised that a more severe public health situation requiring prolonged periods at Alert Levels would push costs beyond that figure.
- 81 On 27 August, in response to the public health outlook and implications of high uptake in the initial days of opening, Cabinet agreed to increase the funding available under the RSPAUG21 by \$300 million [CAB-21-MIN-0344 refers], raising the total value appropriated to \$899.9 million. Cabinet also authorised Joint Ministers to draw down on the CRRF if costs escalate beyond estimates again, up to a cap of \$100 million.

Legislative Implications

- 82 I will make an Order under section 11 of the COVID-19 Public Health Response Act 2020 informed by Cabinet's decision.
- 83 Before making a replacement Order or amending an Order, I must have regard to any advice from the Director-General about the risks of the outbreak or spread of COVID-19, and the nature and extent of any measures that are appropriate to address those risks. I may also have regard to Cabinet's decision on the level of public health measures appropriate to respond to those risks and avoid, mitigate, or remedy the effects of the outbreak or spread of COVID-19.
- 84 Ministerial consultation requirements will be satisfied through previous consultation on template Orders for Alert Level requirements and the proposals outlined in this and Friday's Alert Level review paper.
- 85 The Act requires that there be 48 hours between publishing the Order and its coming into force. However, this requirement does not apply where I am satisfied that the Order should come into force urgently to prevent or contain the outbreak or spread of COVID-19, or when the effect of the order is only to remove or reduce requirements imposed by a COVID-19 order. For the proposals in this paper, I am satisfied that both circumstances would apply.
- 86 I intend to make the new Order, informed by Cabinet's decision, this evening, so it can be published 24 hours before it comes into force.

⁴ This balance does not reflect the cost of any proposals considered at Cabinet on 27 August 2021.

Impact Analysis

87 The Treasury has determined that the regulatory proposals in this paper are exempt from the requirement to provide a Regulatory Impact Statement (RIS) because they are intended to alleviate the short-term impacts of a declared emergency event of COVID-19 outbreak. These proposals are required urgently to be effective, making a complete, robust and timely impact analysis unfeasible.

Human Rights

88 s9(2)(h)

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Proactively Released

Population impacts

- 95 The impacts of community outbreaks of COVID-19 (and the associated Alert Level measures put in place) on vulnerable populations has been canvassed in an earlier section of the paper.

Consultation

- 96 This paper was prepared by the COVID-19 Group in the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet. The Ministry of Health provided specific input and text, including advice on the course of the outbreak, the public health response, and the views and recommendations of the Director-General of Health. The Crown Law Office advised on the NZBORA implications.
- 97 The Treasury, Te Puni Kōkiri, Ministries of Social Development and Pacific Peoples, the Offices for Disability Issues, Seniors and Ethnic Communities have provided input into relevant parts of the paper.

Communications and Proactive Release

- 98 The Prime Minister will communicate the decisions set out in this paper after Cabinet agreement. I intend to proactively release this paper after Cabinet consideration subject to redaction as appropriate under the Official Information Act 1982.
- 99 DPMC will co-ordinate the public communications of the decisions resulting from this paper, with particular emphasis on what movement is allowed and making information available to affected communities, particularly in Auckland and Northland.

Recommendations

The Minister for COVID-19 Response recommends that Cabinet:

- 1 note that since 17 August 2021, 562 community cases of COVID-19 have been identified in New Zealand (as of 9am Monday 30 August) and that all New Zealand has been at Alert Level 4 since 11.59pm, Tuesday 17 August;
- 2 note that on Friday 27 August, Cabinet agreed to keep the whole of New Zealand at Alert Level 4 until at least 11.59pm Tuesday 31 August, but signalled that Cabinet would consider moving all New Zealand, except Auckland and Northland, to Alert Level 3 for at least one week from 11.59pm, Tuesday, 31 August, should the public health risk advice support this shift [CAB-21-MIN-0344 refers];
- 3 note that on Friday 27 August, the Prime Minister signalled to the public that Auckland is expected to remain at Alert Level 4 for a further two weeks, subject to public health advice;
- 4 note extensive PCR and wastewater testing results do not suggest widespread COVID-19 transmission across New Zealand and there have been no known cases outside Auckland and Wellington to date;

Alert Levels

- 5 note the interim public health advice from the Director-General of Health is to:
 - 5.1 keep Auckland at Alert Level 4 for at least two further weeks to Tuesday, 13 September, with a public health review on 5 September, for Cabinet consideration on 6 September;
 - 5.2 keep Northland at Alert Level 4, with a public health review on 5 September for Cabinet consideration on 6 September, with a view to move to Alert Level 3, unless evidence emerges to enable an earlier move; and
 - 5.3 shift the rest of New Zealand to Alert Level 3 at 11:59pm, Tuesday 31 August, with a public health review on 5 September, for Cabinet consideration on 6 September.
- 6 agree on the basis of the interim public health advice, to:
 - 6.1 keep Auckland at Alert Level 4 until at least 11.59pm Tuesday 14 September, with Cabinet to review of these settings on Monday 6 September;
 - 6.2 keep Northland at Alert Level 4 until at least 11.59pm Tuesday 7 September, with Cabinet to review these settings on Monday 6 September;
 - 6.3 move all New Zealand south of Auckland down to Alert Level 3 for at least one week from 11.59pm Tuesday 7 September, with Cabinet to review of these settings on Monday 6 September;
- 7 note Ministers with Power to Act will keep Northland's Alert Level settings under review, including whether evidence emerges to support a move to Alert Level 3 earlier than 11.59pm, Tuesday 7 September;

Alert Level boundary and permitted movement

- 8 agree to the Alert Level 3/2 boundary used in February 2021 (including Port Waikato and parts of the northern Waikato) being used again for the Alert Level 4/3 boundary south of Auckland;
- 9 note work is underway by Police to implement the Alert Level 4/3 boundary mentioned in recommendation 8 and checkpoints across the boundary will be established during daylight hours on Tuesday 31 August;
- 10 note the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment have activated their Business Travel Document register to support Police enforcement of the requirement for evidence at the Alert Level 4/3 boundary;
- 11 direct officials to undertake planning, in consultation with community leaders and iwi, for an Alert Level 4/3 boundary north of Auckland, in anticipation of a future shift in Alert Level settings for Northland to Alert Level 3;

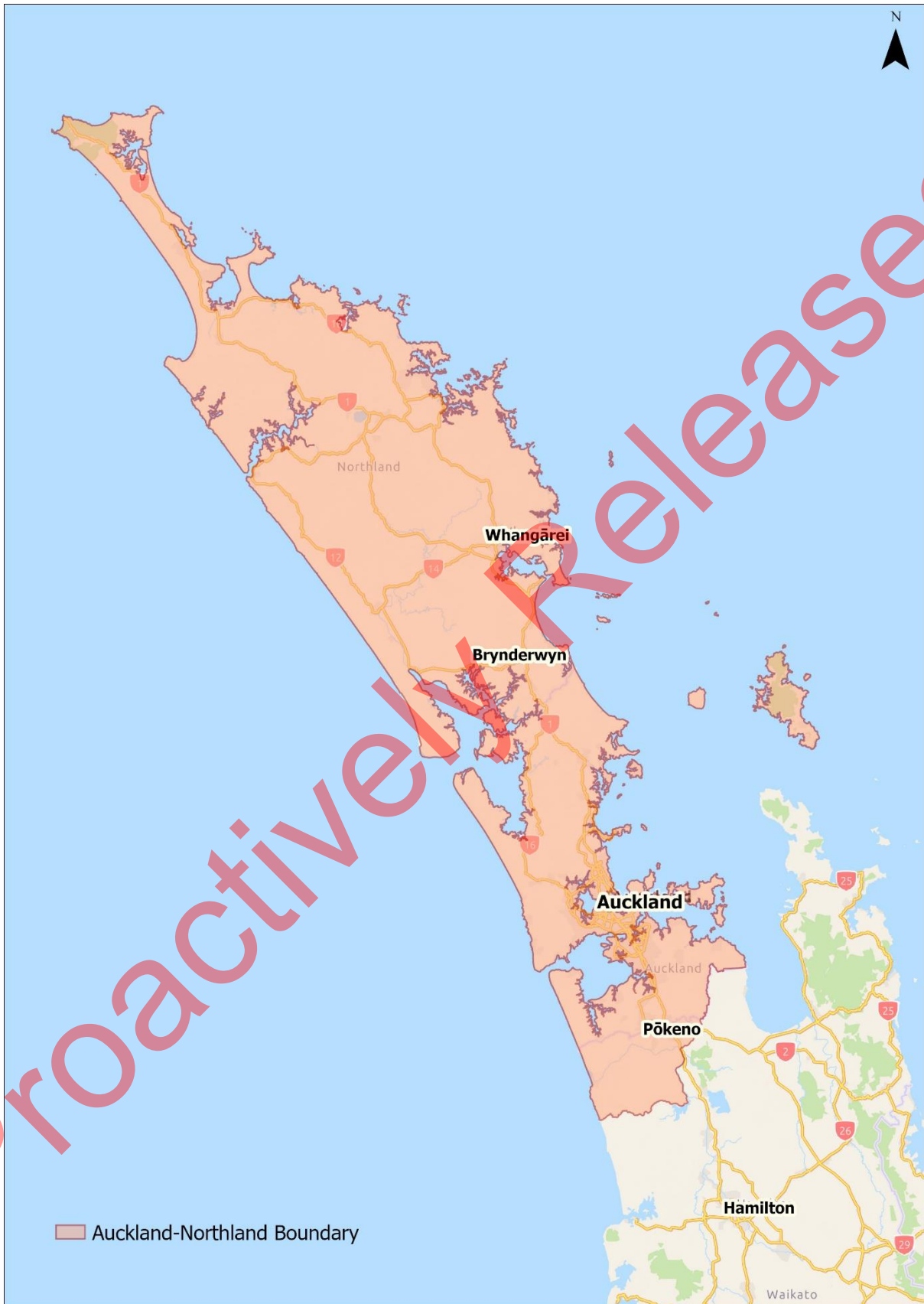
Other matters

- 12 agree that Cabinet's decision today will be communicated by the Prime Minister.

Hon Chris Hipkins
Minister for COVID-19 Response

Proactively Released

Appendix 1 – Map of possible Auckland and Northland Alert Level 4 area



Appendix 2 – Impacts on at risk populations

Māori

- 1 Around 86% of all Māori live in the North Island, 23% of all Māori live in the Auckland region, and 8.3% live in the Northland Region.⁵ Māori are more vulnerable at an overall population level due to greater proportions with comorbidities, and with a much younger population have higher proportional numbers in age cohorts that have only recently become eligible to access vaccination services (around half of the Māori population is aged 24 years and younger).
- 2 Te Puni Kokiri (TPK) emphasises the importance of iwi and hapū involvement in the implementation of boundaries and community response and planning activities, and collaboration with agencies at the local level. This is because of the high trust and connections iwi and hapū have with communities, including access to isolated communities and hard-to-reach whānau who are not being served by mainstream services. Evidence shows that responses led by Māori in connection with their communities will lead to stronger wellbeing outcomes for whānau and embedding increased community resilience.
- 3 With continued lockdowns at Alert Level 4 and ongoing restrictions at Alert Level 3, it will be increasingly difficult to meet whānau wellbeing needs, as other second-wave needs become apparent. While iwi, hapū, providers and Whānau Ora commissioning agencies are already actively working to support whanau (for example providing access to material essentials), TPK's regional reporting is revealing a strong sense of uncertainty in Māori communities experiencing increased strains on their resources. In the Auckland and Northland areas in particular, this includes households struggling to pay bills, community providers and NGOs running low on their operating funding, increasing strain on water access (in Northland in particular, with 50% on reticulated supply), and so on.
- 4 Other areas of emerging concern include:
 - 4.1 Economic – lockdown extensions will impact on the ability of small Māori businesses to sustain themselves into lower alert levels due to low cash reserves. For example, Māori SME in the construction and infrastructure sector will face project delays that affect cash-flow, negatively impacting early momentum created through the government's investment infrastructure and pursuit of progressive procurement policies. The construction sector was the top employment category for Māori in Auckland and second in the Northland rohe in 2020.
 - 4.2 While nearly 40% of Māori authority businesses were fully operational during COVID-19 Alert Level 4 last year, this was almost double the proportion of Māori SMEs, and all New Zealand businesses. No Māori tourism businesses were fully operational under Alert Levels 4 or 3 last year. This flowed through to requests for support from government. Fewer than half of Māori authorities accessed government financial support during the lockdown periods of COVID-19, compared with more

⁵ 2018 Census.

than three-quarters of Māori SMEs, and over 90% of Māori tourism businesses. More than half of Māori tourism businesses also arranged rent reductions or deferment, and postponed or cancelled planned capital investment. In general, Māori tourism businesses were more likely than either Māori authorities or Māori SMEs to make changes to their finances to help adapt to COVID-19 impacts.

- 4.3 Mental health – emerging concerns around mental health and the potential for self-harm incidents (especially of rangatahi who experience higher rates of self-harm and suicide). For example, 712 (65%) of the total applicants requiring material support from Te Pūtahitanga commissioning agency during the first six days of Level 4 lockdown (18-23 August), mentioned and discussed lockdown impacts on mental wellbeing. Financial stress, illness, relationship problems, high deprivation, and lack of support were identified as the factors impacting whānau mental hauora.
- 5 On this basis, support for locally-led responses, transparency, and providing as much certainty as possible are critical to helping communities constructively support and plan for whānau and individual needs (as has been done throughout planning of an Alert Level 4/3 boundary south of Auckland). Iwi and hapū involvement enables more targeted responses and communications to whānau that utilise the main Alert Level 4 guidance, but that is more tailored to their audience. Iwi and hapū involvement can also strengthen the current government response by ensuring whānau needs are identified across services and the relevant supports made available, including whānau who fail to qualify for specific services or supports for whatever reason.

Pacific Peoples

- 6 A significant proportion of the Pacific population living in New Zealand live in the Auckland region (more than 2/3rd). Pacific peoples currently account for a high proportion of the total number of community cases across New Zealand.
- 7 Pacific peoples are more susceptible to the worst health effects of COVID-19 including hospitalisation and death, due to high rates of underlying health conditions. High household overcrowding among Pacific peoples also presents challenges in terms of containing the spread of COVID-19 through self-isolation.
- 8 The current outbreak and associated higher Alert Levels (i.e. Alert Level 3 and 4) impacts the Pacific population in the following ways:
- 8.1 Higher Alert Level settings create restrictions on earning capacity which can amplify pre-existing income and poverty inequities. Pacific providers report a surge in requests and referrals for support, especially food parcels, with some reporting difficulties meeting demand. Extending the duration of higher Alert Levels further exacerbates current challenges faced by Pacific families and communities to meet basic needs.
- 8.2 Other emerging issues include a significant increase in reported mental health issues, particularly among young people, and increased racial

discrimination targeted towards Pacific peoples, which is linked to the large outbreak among the Pacific community in South Auckland. These issues can be expected to be heightened as a result of further Pacific cases and extended lockdown durations.

8.3 Direct feedback from the community via the latest Auckland Church Leaders Zoom Fono, notes the following emerging and ongoing impacts:

8.3.1 self-isolation challenges for larger intergenerational families, and language support needs for MIQ;

8.3.2 challenges to access support and/or know what is available (e.g. food parcels, financial support, education resources);

8.3.3 overwhelming demand on community and providers' resources and funding, with some sources exhausted; and

8.3.4 access to vaccination and testing stations.

9 Pacific peoples have the overall lowest vaccination rates. Low vaccination rates can be linked to a range of factors including low health literacy and associated vulnerability to misinformation, vaccine hesitancy, digital exclusion, regional isolation, and eligibility.

10 Low health literacy means that Pacific peoples are more likely to need support to navigate the complexities of vaccination and will seek out this support from trusted community leaders. Church leaders, Pacific providers, and community navigators continue to be critical sources of trusted information from government into the community about keeping safe from COVID-19, and the importance of getting vaccinated.

Ethnic Communities

11 Ethnic communities are feeling particularly vulnerable in this lockdown, due to the combined effects of uncertainty due to broader policy changes in immigration (the inability to reunite with families and uncertain immigration status for those on work and student visas) and lacking appropriate support particularly in mental health and wellbeing. This is despite filling an important role in the country's response to COVID-19 as essential workers, and the contribution to the economy.

12 New Zealand's ethnic communities make up roughly 20% of the population. About 60% of people from these communities live in Auckland. As with previous lockdowns, there continue to be concerns around the loss of jobs, reduced hours, and the financial impact on families. Challenges associated with digital connectedness and a limited understanding of English can leave ethnic communities, especially the elderly, highly socially vulnerable in the context of COVID-19, particularly if they are not living with whānau as part of their bubble under Alert Level 4. Within ethnic communities, there are many self-employed or small business owners, which cannot operate under Alert Level 4. Further, there have been reports that dairy owners have received racist abuse after

enforcing new face covering requirements. There are also reports of increasing online racism.

- 13 While the restrictions at Alert Level 3 are relatively similar to Alert Level 4, the ability to have contactless pick-up and delivery, and to expand bubbles, will be beneficial. It will also allow funerals of up to 10 people, which has been a particularly challenging setting to navigate in Alert Level 4. The continuation of Alert Level 4 in Auckland may exacerbate the systemic issue of lack of options for culturally appropriate food from food banks. Other issues around boundary level definitions will likely impact ethnic communities in a broadly similar way to other communities.

Disabled People

- 14 The Office for Disability Issues has advised that, for disabled people, the following issues require ongoing consideration while Alert Level restrictions are in place:
- 14.1 If Alert Level 4 is extended in the Auckland region, targeted well-being out-calling should be considered through service providers, education staff supporting disabled children, and funding of non-government organisations to ensure that at risk family/whanau and individuals have access to food and essential services when these are not able to be accessed independently.
 - 14.2 improving communications about the flexible COVID testing and vaccination options available when disabled people have transport difficulties and/or need adapted approaches. There are reports that these accommodations vary between DHBs and that information is not readily available.
 - 14.3 greater respect for those who have face covering exemptions (people are experiencing aggravation and hostility from security guards, the public, supermarkets etc) and the need to tighten up the exemption process.
 - 14.4 access to key information in alternate formats – NZSL translations, easy read, blind and low vision formats;
 - 14.5 maintaining the provision of home and personal care services, and ensuring support workers service is not compromised by border issues; and
 - 14.6 for COVID related services, such as vaccinations, gather information in data collection on disabled people accessing these services. Two simple questions - do you need support today to access this service, are you disabled?

Older People

- 15 Issues that will impact older people during a longer period of time spent at higher Alert Levels include:

- 15.1 Accessing online services – for older people digital exclusion increases with age. Some people still pay bills in person and will be impacted by the lockdown and not being able to pay their essential service bills (power, telephone etc).
- 15.2 Food delivery services – during lockdown, older people are encouraged to get others to do their shopping. This becomes problematic if they can't go online or aren't able to get someone to assist them. Sometimes payment becomes an issue (access to cash). Closure of a number of supermarkets in Auckland are also impacting on being able to access food supplies.
- 16 The difference between Alert Level 3 and 4 settings is not significant for older people. Anxiety about how to keep themselves and others safe will continue to be high due to the virulent nature of the Delta strain. These increased levels of anxiety are reportedly putting demands on providers that specialise in providing support to older people. Officials predict that demand for these services/support will remain high.
- 17 With the indication that Auckland (at least) will have lockdown restrictions in place for at least a month, NGOs and community organisations who have been delivering services and providing emergency support may experience financial stress. For the rest of the country, the impact on organisations will be influenced by the length of time spent at Alert Level 3.
- 18 There is a need to ensure that older people who are yet to be vaccinated are being proactively contacted, starting with the oldest cohorts. The longer we remain at AL 3 or 4 the more difficult it becomes for older people to resume normal activities with confidence.

Young People

- 19 As reported in the 27 August Alert Level Review Cabinet paper, officials have seen a significant surge in support being sought by young people in relation to their mental and general wellbeing. Temporary funding has been allocated to Youthline to allow them to cope with the significant increase in demand they are experiencing for support from young people.
- 20 Providers are reporting that there are pockets of young people across the country struggling. There are a range of issues being reported, including needing support to leave unsafe living environments, being isolated and having no way to engage support networks, misinformation around vaccine risk leading to a lack of interest in being vaccinated, and increased anxiety in young people.

People experiencing family violence or sexual violence

- 21 Sector bodies (representing providers such as women's refuges) have not reported any significant shifts in demand for sexual violence and family violence services since Alert Level 4 commenced. Police are undertaking further analysis of reports to better understand emerging issues.

Appendix 3 – Overview of previous Cabinet decisions on permissions for movement across the Alert Level 4/3 boundary for work purposes

Cabinet has agreed to the permissions for movement across the Alert Level 4/3 boundary for work purposes

1. Cabinet recently agreed that when establishing an Alert Level 4/3 boundary the same categories of workers that can travel within the current Alert Level 4 area will be permitted to move from one Alert Level area to another [CAB XX refers].
2. Travel for work within an Alert Level 4 area and across an Alert Level 4/3 boundary will be restricted to people:
 - 2.1. working for an Alert Level 4 business or service (such as food and beverage production); and
 - 2.2. working for a business or service that are exempt from the requirements of the Order (such as Police or NZ Fire and Emergency).
3. This means that workers other than those described in paragraph 2 will not be permitted to travel to an Alert Level 3 area to work for a business or service that cannot operate at Alert Level 4 and vice versa.
4. The Director-General [will consider] whether businesses and services which have been granted exemptions to operate at Alert Level 4 should also be permitted to move from one alert level area to another. He can also grant exemptions more generally for travel across an Alert Level boundary.
5. Cabinet also agreed that to minimise the cumulative risk of travel across the boundary employers of workers permitted to travel between Alert Level areas must have systems and processes in place to minimise:
 - 5.1. the public health risks of their workers travelling between and within Alert Level 3 and 4 areas; and
 - 5.2. the numbers of workers needing to travel between and within Alert Level 3 and 4 areas.
6. In addition to the proposed permissions for workers, Cabinet agreed to a requirement that workers only travel for the permitted purpose and, so far as reasonably practicable, not to stop en-route.

Cabinet also agreed to several permissions for individual movement across the Alert Level 4/3 boundary for non-work reasons

7. In addition to the proposed permissions for workers, Cabinet agreed that people should only be allowed to travel across the Alert Level boundary (including to transit from one Alert Level 3 area to another) for the following purposes:
 - 7.1. urgent care of a child or to provide care or support to a person in a critical or terminal condition (if no other appropriate person can provide care within the area);

- 7.2. shared caregiving arrangements;
 - 7.3. access a health service with appointment (or receive their Pfizer vaccine in the same or adjoining district);
 - 7.4. access a judicial institution where required or permitted, or to leave or relocate home on Court order;
 - 7.5. return home from hospital or residential care or health service or relocate to another hospital or residential care or health service;
 - 7.6. emergencies;
 - 7.7. leave New Zealand;
 - 7.8. go home – From Alert Level 3 to Alert Level 4 only;
 - 7.9. go home after MIQ (or arrival in NZ where no MIQ required); and
 - 7.10. care for pets or other animals, if travel is necessary to prevent a breach of the Animal Welfare Act and no one else in the area can provide the care.
8. Where people are travelling in and out of the Alert level 4 area solely for the purpose of transiting from an Alert Level 3 area to another Alert Level 3 area, this is permitted for travel to work (including at an Alert Level 3 business) and travel home.
 9. In addition to these permissions, exemptions for personal travel across the Alert Level 4/3 boundary can also be granted by the Director-General of Health of Health (including for compassionate reasons).
 10. As noted above for workers, people who are permitted to cross an Alert Level boundary from an Alert Level 4 area to an area at Alert Level 3 would be encouraged to observe Alert Level 4 restrictions while in the Alert Level 3 area.

Appendix 4 – Key Testing and Contact Tracing Data

11. As at 5.30pm 29 August, there are 33,365 contacts identified in relation to the August community cases record in the National Contact Tracing Solution. 27,333 of these 33,365 cases have been contacted and are self-isolating.
12. A breakdown of these 33,365 contacts by contact type is provided below.

Contact Type	Total	Reached	Any Result	Positive	Negative
Close Plus	842	745 (88%)	638 (75%)	226 (26.8%)	412 (48%)
Close	30,080	25,467 (84%)	25,804 (85%)	117 (0.4%)	25,687 (85%)
Casual Plus	2,443	1,121 (45%)	2,206 (90%)	0 (0%)	2,206 (90%)
Total	33,365	27,333 (81%)	28,648 (85%)	343 (1%)	28,305 (84%)

cases can be notified prior to being entered as contacts in NCTS. Many are not being entered as contacts in NCTS retroactively, likely due to the prioritisation of work. Therefore this is likely an undercount of the total number of contacts advanced to case.



Cabinet

Minute of Decision

This document contains information for the New Zealand Cabinet. It must be treated in confidence and handled in accordance with any security classification, or other endorsement. The information can only be released, including under the Official Information Act 1982, by persons with the appropriate authority.

COVID-19 Response: 30 August Review of Alert Level Settings

Portfolio COVID-19 Response

On 30 August 2021, Cabinet:

Situation update

- 1 **noted** that since 17 August 2021, 562 community cases of COVID-19 have been identified in New Zealand (as of 9.00 am Monday, 30 August 2021) and that all New Zealand has been at Alert Level 4 since 11.59 pm, Tuesday, 17 August 2021;
- 2 **noted** that on Friday, 27 August 2021, Cabinet agreed to keep the whole of New Zealand at Alert Level 4 until at least 11.59 pm Tuesday, 31 August 2021, but signalled that Cabinet would consider moving all New Zealand, except Auckland and Northland, to Alert Level 3 for at least one week from 11.59 pm, Tuesday, 31 August 2021, should the public health risk advice support this shift [CAB-21-MIN-0344];
- 3 **noted** that on Friday, 27 August 2021, the Prime Minister signalled to the public that Auckland is expected to remain at Alert Level 4 for a further two weeks, subject to public health advice;
- 4 **noted** that extensive PCR and wastewater testing results do not suggest widespread COVID-19 transmission across New Zealand and there have been no known cases outside Auckland and Wellington to date;

Alert levels

- 5 **noted** that the interim public health advice from the Director-General of Health is to:
 - 5.1 keep Auckland at Alert Level 4 for at least two further weeks to Tuesday, 14 September 2021, with a public health review on 5 September 2021, for Cabinet consideration on 6 September 2021;
 - 5.2 keep Northland at Alert Level 4, with a public health review on 5 September 2021 for Cabinet consideration on 6 September 2021, with a view to move to Alert Level 3, unless evidence emerges to enable an earlier move; and
 - 5.3 shift the rest of New Zealand to Alert Level 3 at 11:59 pm, Tuesday, 31 August 2021, with a public health review on 5 September 2021, for Cabinet consideration on 6 September 2021;

- 6 **agreed** on the basis of the interim public health advice, and the updated advice from the Director-General of Health on the situation in Northland, to:
- 6.1 keep Auckland at Alert Level 4 until at least 11.59 pm, Tuesday, 14 September 2021, with Cabinet to review these settings on Monday, 6 September 2021;
 - 6.2 keep Northland at Alert Level 4 until at least 11.59 pm, Thursday, 2 September 2021, and to move down to Alert Level 3 at that time subject to further public health advice, with Cabinet to review these settings on Monday, 6 September 2021;
 - 6.3 move all New Zealand south of Auckland down to Alert Level 3 for at least one week from 11.59 pm Tuesday, 31 August 2021, with Cabinet to review these settings on Monday, 6 September 2021;

Alert Level boundary and permitted movement

- 7 **agreed** to the Alert Level 3/2 boundary used in February 2021 (including Port Waikato and parts of the northern Waikato) being used again for the Alert Level 4/3 boundary south of Auckland;
- 8 **noted** that work is underway by Police to implement the Alert Level 4/3 boundary referred to in paragraph 7 and checkpoints across the boundary will be established during daylight hours on Tuesday, 31 August 2021;
- 9 **noted** that the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment has activated its Business Travel Document register to support Police enforcement of the requirement for evidence at the Alert Level 4/3 boundary;
- 10 **directed** officials to undertake planning, in consultation with community leaders and iwi, for the Alert Level 4/3 boundary north of Auckland, to give effect to the shift of Northland to Alert Level 3 in accordance with paragraph 6.2 above;

Other matters

- 11 **agreed** that Cabinet's decision today will be communicated by the Prime Minister.

Michael Webster
Secretary of the Cabinet