

Auckland moves back to alert level 3 at 6am Sunday 28 February 2021, the rest of NZ moves to alert level 2

At a press conference on Saturday 27 February 2021, Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern announced that Auckland will move to Alert Level 3 as of 6am Sunday 28 February, whilst the rest of the country will move to Alert Level 2. The move comes after two new Covid-19 community cases announced earlier on 27 February could not be directly linked to earlier cases, the prime minister has confirmed.

Ardern said cabinet made the decision Auckland will move to alert level 3 for seven days, while the rest of the country will go to level 2. She said Cabinet would assess the alert levels along the way, but it's likely Auckland would be in alert level 3 for the full seven days.

Aucklanders are asked to stay at home, in their bubbles other than for essential movement. Those who can work from home are asked to do so. If you go outside, maintain physical distancing. Children are asked to stay home from school in Auckland, although for essential worker parents who need to be at work, they will be open.

Supermarkets, pharmacies, petrol stations, and primary produce stores can remain open. Ardern urged people not to rush to supermarkets.

Businesses that normally operate on face-to-face basis are now asked to move to non-contact methods like click and collect or online ordering, she said.

Public venues will be closed, including playgrounds, libraries, cinemas, gyms, pools and markets. Gatherings outside people's bubbles is prohibited with the exception of groups of 10 for wedding services, funerals and tangihanga. Public health measures will still need to be maintained in these events.

"Some will ask whether we should have stayed in level 3 from the 14 February right up until this day today. That was not what the evidence required and therefore it was also not the advice we were given."

She said with more than 100,000 tests since the community case on 14 February, wastewater testing showing up negative, Papatoetoe High School mass testing and stringent contact tracing and isolating measures, it was not deemed necessary at the time to extend alert levels.

Dr Bloomfield said the information he had was that the person had the Covid-19 test then went to a gym afterwards.

Ardern said she was confident that the person was aware of the isolation advice.

"Obviously in this case, despite that communication over what was expected, that has not occurred here. We have a test though and ultimately we need that test to make sure we are not putting other people at risk."

She said part of the complication was that some people who were meant to be in isolation, did not follow the rules and that was a contributing factor to the change in alert levels.

"But there is no doubt that a contributing factor to the issue we are now facing is that the guidelines and rules have not always been followed. People who should have been in isolation weren't, that has created multiple high-risk situations. I say that not to place blame ... no-one asked for Covid-19," she said.

"We just need to hang in there."

"To every New Zealander listening right now, I know how frustrated you will feel, but ultimately as Dr Bloomfield has always said it is the virus that is the problem - we still need an environment where people will speak, come forward and be tested and if people are afraid and they are shamed and vilified, they won't."

She said an added complication in dealing with this cluster was that it involved young people, although she added that was not an excuse.

Bloomfield encouraged people with symptoms and those who were at locations of interest to get a test, especially younger people who may put down their symptoms to other issues.

Key information for Alert Level 3:

- If you have any symptoms of COVID-19 or are unwell, stay home and get in contact with your doctor or Healthline.
- Stay home and within your personal household bubble. If you can work or educate from home, please do.
- Maintain physical distancing of 2 metres when you are in public.
- Mask use is highly encouraged, and mandatory on public transport.
- Gatherings of up to 10 people can continue, but only for: wedding services and funerals and tangihanga.

Key information for other regions and Alert Level 2:

- If you have any symptoms of COVID-19 or are unwell, stay home and get in contact with your doctor or Healthline.
- Gatherings and events must be less than 100 people and physical distance should be maintained from others when in public – two metres in public and retail stores and one metre in workplaces, cafes, restaurants and gyms.
- Mask use is highly encouraged, and mandatory on public transport.

See the Government's Unite Against COVID-19 site for more information.

Alert Level 3: <https://covid19.govt.nz/covid-19/restrictions/alert-level-3/>

Alert Level 2: <https://covid19.govt.nz/covid-19/restrictions/alert-level-2/>

Resources:

Covid-19: Auckland back to alert level three after new community cases revealed

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