

Covid 19 coronavirus (Boyle, 2021) Community case is African strain

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The Covid-19 community case in Northland is the South African strain, Covid recovery minister Chris Hipkins says.

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The Covid-19 community case in Northland is the South African strain, Covid recovery minister Chris Hipkins says.

The South African variant may be more infectious than the original strain of coronavirus.

"The source of the infection is highly likely to be a fellow returnee during the person's stay at the Pullman Hotel," Hipkins said.

"This is good news because it means we know where the source of infection is and we don't have to divert our scientists and health experts from other Covid-related work."

The community case - a 56-year-old woman who lives south of Whangarei - was in managed isolation in Auckland's Pullman Hotel.

Director general of health Ashley Bloomfield said the community case had not flagged respiratory symptoms. The woman reported chills and muscle aches but not a runny nose or a cough.

Travellers who stayed in MIQ at the Pullman Hotel from January 9-24 are being asked to self-isolate "immediately" Hipkins said

Hipkins said of the 255 returnees that exited the hotel within the new infection window 172 had been contacted by 8am.

How did this happen in managed isolation?

The person officials believe passed on the infection to the Northland community case arrived in New Zealand on January 9.

Early information suggests transmission happened between this date and January 13.

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CCTV footage from the hotel is being reviewed to look for any interaction between the two people, Hipkins said. Officials not believe another person linked the two.

"The review so far has confirmed what we said yesterday - the Northland case has adhered to infection control guidelines in her room and in the exercise space," he said.

"Again, I want to thank her for her diligence."

Monthly audits are made on prevention measures, he said, however an urgent investigation is underway to look again in case further changes can be made.

"That will also include looking at whether returnee movement should be restricted towards the end of their stay in managed isolation after they have had their final test and before they have been released," Hipkins said.

Work was also underway on new filtration devices in the air conditioning in managed isolation facilities, he said.

Returnees at Pullman Hotel kept in MIQ longer

It was decided this morning the release of people staying at the Pullman Hotel will be delayed, Hipkins said.

Forty-six people are impacted by that decision, he said.

Of about 220 staff at the Pullman Hotel, 114 have been tested this week and the remainder of tests will be completed by 4pm, he said.





The latest community case was in managed isolation at Auckland's Pullman Hotel earlier this month. Photo / Peter Meecham.

Hipkins said he is getting further advice about possibly restricting returnee movements in the final stage of their managed isolation.

Others over the past few days in managed isolation have tested positive late in their stay, Bloomfield said.

Hipkins said he had previously been advised it was not justified to ask people to self-isolate after they leave managed isolation.

Asking whether or not the number of returnees should be limited from some countries, Hipkins said "people are waiting a long time to get home."

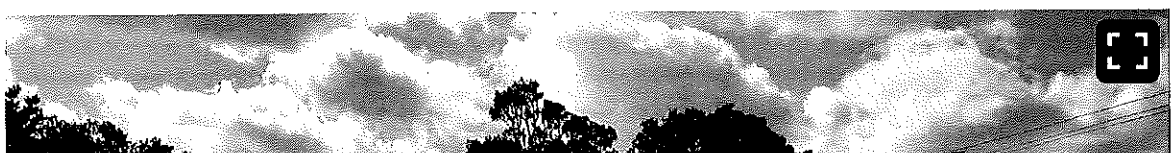
There was an emergency allocation amount but that was in huge demand, he said, with many applications being declined.

Long waits for testing in Northland



3.5 hour wait for Covid testing as officials urge patience. Video / Adam Pearce

Asked about the delay Bloomfield said there would be testing waits in some places. There were 17 sites up and running in the region which were swabbing people for Covid.





Long queues formed at testing stations in Kamo. Photo / Karina Cooper

"We want people to be tested."

Bloomfield said there was always an increase in the volume of people waiting for tests when something like this happened.

He recommended people took water with them and something to eat.

National moves irs caucus

The National Party has decided to move its first caucus of the year from Whangarei to Wellington in light of the Covid case.

It is due to take place on Monday and Tuesday next week.

A spokesman said it was a precautionary approach.

Fake lockdown news on social media

Infographics that had been circulated on Facebook about a lockdown were fake, Hipkins said.

He urged people to only share information they knew was true.

People should not underestimate the ability for fake news to do real harm, he said.

"It's good people share news about Covid-19. Just make sure it's verified and accurate."

Community case has 15 close contacts

Bloomfield said contact tracing on the Northland case has identified 15 people as close contacts.

Thirteen of them worked in two retail settings and it is not immediately clear who served the case, he said.

"All have been contacted, are self-isolating and have been tested."

Two of the woman's closest contacts - her husband and hairdresser - have returned negative test results to "peace of mind" for the rest of

"There is limited epidemiological data available to date," Bloomfield said of the South African variant which is also known as B.1.3.5.1.

"What we know so far is that it may be more transmissible, but that's not as clear as the information about the variant first identified in the UK.

"There is some evidence that this variant may evade some aspects of the body's immune response."

Bloomfield said it was still early days and they would keep a watchful eye on what this means.

New forms or variants have become "increasingly common" around the world.

"They are not confined to specific countries. And we had expected to see them in New Zealand."

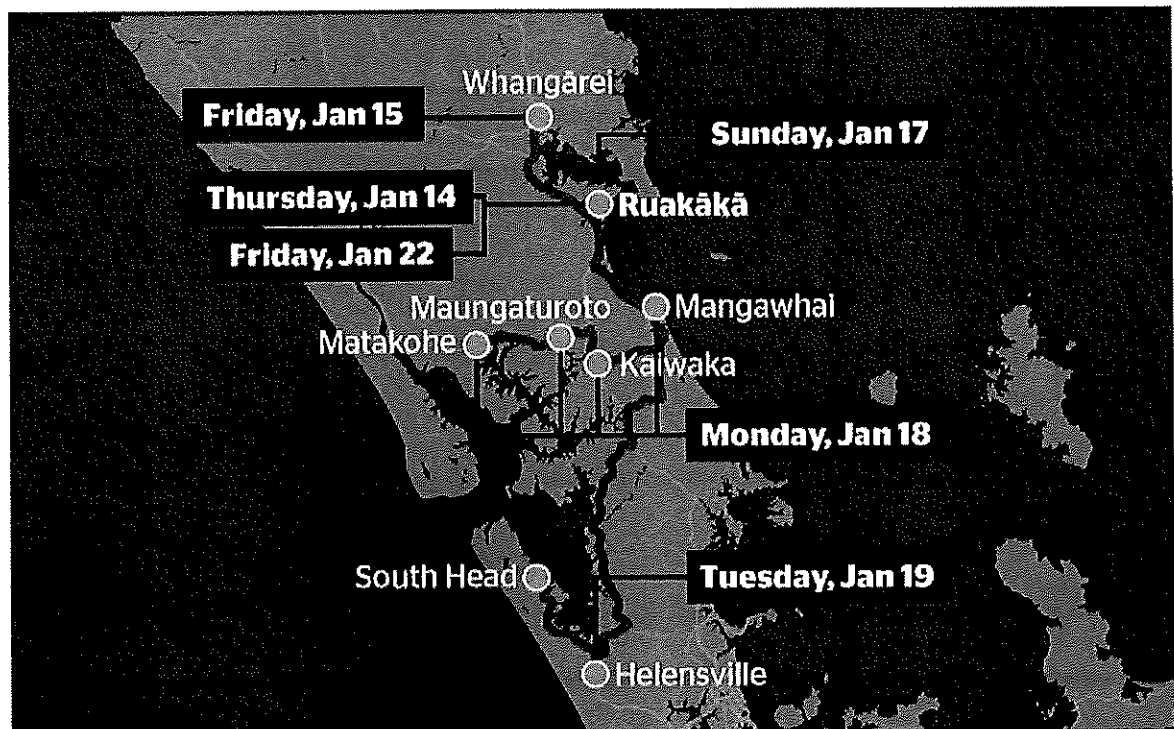
In New Zealand genomic sequencing was undertaken on every single case, he said.

He wanted to acknowledge the woman's frequent use of the scanning app.

"It has enabled us to follow up quickly anyone who may have had contact with her," Bloomfield said.

"I can't thank the person enough for her dedicated use of the app. Remember this could be anyone at any time."

Possible journey



Locations of interest

January 14

FreshChoice Ruakākā

3.03pm-4.33pm

Aesthetic Clothing Store

8.48am-9.53am

Ruakākā General Store

11.08am-12.10pm

FreshChoice Ruakākā

11.10am-12.15pm

January 17

January 19

Kaipara Coast Plant

Centre & Sculpture

Gardens

11.04am-1.04pm

noel Leeming Whangārei 9.02am-10.12am	8.17am-9.47am	1.08pm-2.38pm
Bendon Whangārei 9.03am-10.30am	Joseph Taylor Homewares 2.08pm-3.18pm	Countdown Helensville 1.46pm-3.01pm
The Warehouse Whangārei 9.28am-10.58am	January 18	Super Liquor Helensville 2.03pm-3.08pm
Flaming Fires 10.24am-11.34am	Eutopia Cafe 8.55am-10.55am	South Head General Store 2.44pm-3.49pm
Whangārei and Kamo Testing Stations 10.40am-11.45am	Maungaturoto Second Hand Shop 10.06am-11.36am	January 21
Bed Bath and Beyond Whangārei 10.54am-12.04pm	Maungaturoto Four Square 10.44am-11.49am	Macnut Cafe Helensville 10.20am-11.50am
Fat Camel Cafe 11.34am-1.34pm	White Rock Gallery 11.15am-12.24pm	January 22
Parua Bay Tavern 3.20pm-5.20pm	The Kauri Museum 11.21am-3.21pm	Orrs Unichem Pharmacy Ruakākā 11.21am-12.26pm
January 16	Gumdliggers Cafe Matakohe 12:39 pm - 2:39 pm	MOH advises anyone who visited these locations at the times listed to get a Covid test and self isolate until you receive a negative result
Bream Bay Butchers Ruakākā 11.02am-12.07pm	Dune Restaurant & Bar 4.47pm-7.17pm	

Mapbox / Herald Network graphic

Ministry couldn't contact all businesses that community case visited

Bloomfield said yesterday that all businesses where the community cases have visited would be contacted before a full list of locations would be published.

Bloomfield today said that as many locations of interest as possible were contacted to alert them.

"We were not able to get through to all of them," he said.

"By yesterday evening we made the call to publish the list of those sites and to send out a push notification to people who had been there."

Hipkins said there was some pressure to release the business list quickly.

Officials did take a reasonable amount of time but they had to draw a line under it at some point and make that publication in full online, he said.

If businesses have not been contacted they need to get in touch with health officials, he said.

Covid QR code scanning

On scanning, Hipkins said: "We are not asking you to do this because it is a fun thing to do."

"It does make an enormous difference."

Businesses need to check codes have not become too tatty to scan, he said.





People are being encouraged to continue scanning QR codes. Photo / Dean Purcell

Preferably businesses should have fresh QR codes up in a number of different places to make them easy to access, he said.

While showing someone to a table in hospitality, ask the customer if they have scanned in, Hipkins said.

More than 160 push notifications were sent to people on the app who had scanned in at locations that the community case was at.

An extra 200,000 people enabled the Bluetooth function on the app yesterday.

Waitangi

Hipkins is yet to see any evidence that Waitangi events would be disrupted, he said.

He feels more optimistic about this today than he did yesterday.

Bloomfield said there is a group of senior officials reaching out to iwi hosting and involved with Waitangi celebrations.

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Woman's husband and hairdresser test negative

The woman's husband has tested negative, Hipkins said this morning, as had another close contact.

She left on January 13 and, after developing Covid symptoms, was tested on Friday January 22.

Between leaving the Pullman and Covid being confirmed on Saturday, she visited 28 places around Northland and anyone there at the same time has been asked to get a test and to self-isolate until the results are known.

The woman arrived back in New Zealand from Europe on December 30 and spent 14 days at the Pullman. After getting a negative tests on January 2 and 10 before leaving.

The woman has been praised for assiduously using QR codes which has given a detailed record of her movements while possibly infectious.

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Six cases in managed isolation today

There are six cases of COVID-19 in managed isolation to report since yesterday.

Twenty previously reported cases have now recovered. The total number of active cases in New Zealand is 64. Our total number of confirmed cases is 1,932.

The total number of tests processed by laboratories to date is 1,489,913.

On Sunday, 2,678 tests were processed. The seven-day rolling average up to yesterday is 3,451 tests processed.

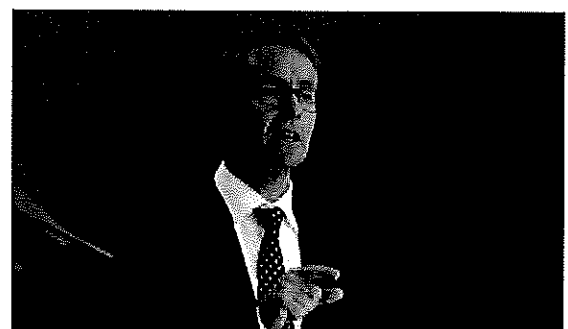
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