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## Covid-19: Auckland Airport border worker tests positive, sixteen close contacts

Hannah Martin · 17:59, Apr 20 2021



STUFF

Kiwis welcome Australians to New Zealand, as the first flights from Australia arrive after the opening of the trans-Tasman travel bubble.

A fully vaccinated border worker at Auckland Airport, who works cleaning planes that have come from countries with a high-risk of Covid-19, has tested positive for the virus.

Five household contacts have been tested and returned negative results. Close contacts from the person's workplace are being identified, isolated and tested. Sixteen close contacts have been identified so far.



SEAN GALLUP/GETTY IMAGES

There is one new case of Covid-19 officially being reported on Tuesday, but health officials have advised a border worker has also tested positive.

It comes after the first quarantine-free flights from Australia arrived in the country on Monday, with the opening of the [trans-Tasman bubble](#).

#### READ MORE:

- \* [Trans-Tasman bubble in pictures: Families reunited in New Zealand airports after Australian flights](#)
- \* [What's the risk if Australia opens its international borders?](#)
- \* [Red zone roulette - how a bubble flight to Sydney took a surprising twist](#)

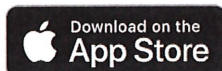
In a press conference on Tuesday afternoon, Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern said the person was routinely tested, most recently on April 12 and 19, the latter of which was when the positive result was caught.

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"When we opened on both sides we of course knew we would continue to have cases connected to our border."

"We accept that's going to be part of our journey together," she said.

The person's work at Auckland Airport is their sole employment.

Additional pop-up testing has been set up at Auckland Airport on Tuesday afternoon, in addition to the testing site already running at the airport.



Auckland International Airport has split its international terminal in two to enable safe quarantine-free travel.

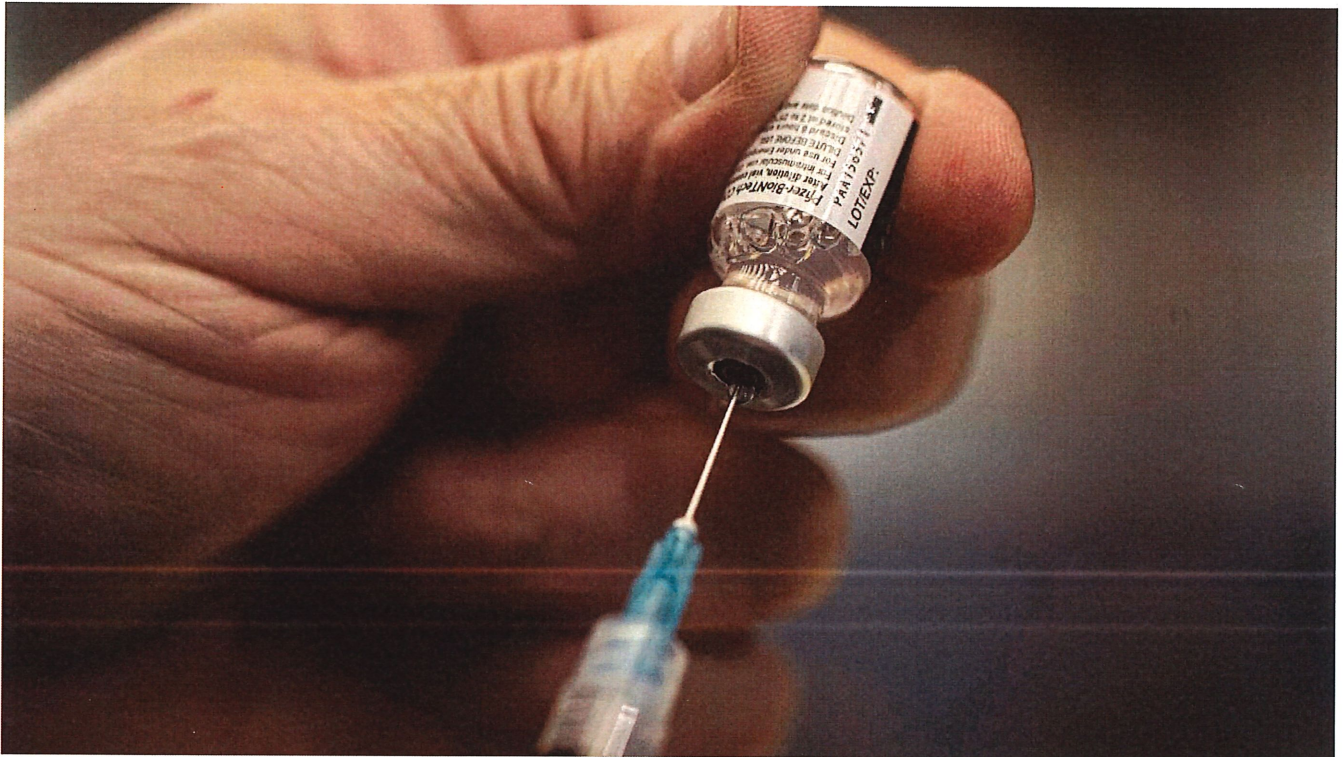
There were [three locations of interest linked to the case](#): Westfield St Luke's Mall foodcourt, Bunnings New Lynn, and Movenpick Dominion Road, all on Saturday, April



The ministry said its assessment, based on what it knows so far, is that the risk to the public “appears low”.

The person’s PCR test has been sent for whole genome sequencing – the results of which are expected on Wednesday, the ministry said.

Ardern said officials “entirely expect” that people who are vaccinated will still get Covid-19.



ESTEBAN FELIX/AP

The Pfizer vaccine is stated to be about 95 per cent effective, but breakthrough infections happen with all vaccines.

She said the [Pfizer] vaccine was 95 effective at reducing symptoms of the virus.

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It is still possible to catch Covid-19 if vaccinated, but you are much less likely to get sick.

“This is not a worker who is very unwell,” she said.

Ardern said the case did not mean New Zealand had a leaky border and said it was understandable that someone who cleans planes from high-risk countries had contracted Covid-19.



Ardern told ABC Breakfast on Tuesday that 1800 Australian citizens crossed the border on Monday.



JOHN ANTHONY/STUFF

Arrivals to New Zealand were down 40 per cent over the three-day travel freeze with New South Wales compared to the same period the previous week.

When asked about the new case on Tuesday afternoon, Federal Minister for Health in Australia, Greg Hunt, told media New Zealand was “onto this”.

“We have full confidence in New Zealand's system. We’ve seen them deal with the inevitable outbreaks.”

A spokesperson for the Australia Department of Health told *Stuff*: “At this stage there was no change to current travel arrangements, as a public health response is underway”.

E tū's head of aviation Savage said the union learned this afternoon that one of its members tested positive.



ALEX ELLINGHAUSEN/SYDNEY MORNING HERALD

Australia's Federal Health Minister Greg Hunt told media they had "full confidence" in New Zealand's system to respond to the case.

The person was acting under the directives of the Ministry of Health, "as are a number of their colleagues", he said.

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"A union organiser is onsite now coordinating a response with the employer. We are focusing – as we do in these situations – on advising union members, and ensuring they are safe and being kept up to date by their employer."

Savage said the union will be looking closely at whether the health and safety systems at the employer "are up to scratch", and is "reassured" the ministry is investigating what, if anything, can be improved or needs to change.

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