

Covid-19 Delta outbreak: Eight new cases - Auckland Mayor Phil Goff slams Destiny Church leader Brian Tamaki over lockdown protest plans

28 Sep, 2021 05:05 PM

(Cheng, 2021g)

Auckland Mayor Phil Goff slams 'idiot' Brian Tamaki over his lockdown protest plan, saying it risks undermining the region's big sacrifices. Video / Newstalk ZB



By: **Derek Cheng**

Derek Cheng is a senior writer for the New Zealand Herald

derek.cheng@nzme.co.nz

Auckland Mayor Phil Goff has slammed Destiny Church leader Brian Tamaki as an "idiot", following revelations he is planning a public, anti-lockdown protest in Auckland this weekend.

"If I recall rightly, Brian and Hannah Tamaki were telling their congregation not to get vaccinated," Goff told Newstalk ZB's Heather du Plessis-Allan.

"So first of all, they give people the opposite advice to what's good for individuals, their families in the community. And then they want to go out while every one of us is making a sacrifice and trying to follow the rules. To break the rules by congregating together in a way that you might spread the virus. It doesn't make sense to me.

"So many Aucklanders have worked so hard and sacrificed so much to try to get rid of this virus. These people seem to be working in the opposite direction. That's not good enough."

The Herald [revealed today](#) that top police bosses Andrew Coster and Wally Haumaha have met virtually with Tamaki over his plans for the anti-lockdown protest rally.

Coster told Tamaki he was concerned with the positioning of the protest and the particular use of the phrase "Let's get arrested".

"We would ask that you clarify your public messaging on this point, i.e. be clear that you intend to run this event safely, and that you do not intend people to act in a way that leads to their arrest."

Coster said that in continuing with the planned event, "you do risk an enforcement response by police".

Goff said he wished there was "some element of common sense" from Tamaki.

"Our police have got so many things that they need to be doing fighting crime, they don't need to be wasting their time dealing with idiots.

"We've seen it in the United States and we've seen it in Australia and Melbourne recently and we've all thought most of New Zealand is more sensible than that - they follow common sense and they're not extreme," said Goff.

"And, you know, and I hope that whatever happens on Sunday doesn't involve, that sort of behaviour and confrontation with the police and deliberate action that, that makes people unsafe. And if they do those things, then they should expect the police to respond to uphold the law in the rights of every other New Zealand, not to get ill, and not to be hospitalised and not to die of this disease."

Asked whether the city could be in level 2 early next week, Goff told du Plessis-Allan that he hoped Auckland could be there as soon as possible - he said he was regularly talking to the Prime Minister.

"I'll tell her that we're all looking forward to the freedoms that we all enjoy. And I'll tell her that it doesn't help that idiots like Mr Tamaki and his cohorts are making it harder for the rest of us."

Today's case numbers

There are eight Covid cases in the community today, including a person who presented at Waitakere Hospital.

There is one unlinked case today - the person who arrived at the hospital. Five staff members have been stood down.

Eight patients are being treated as contacts, director-general of health Ashley Bloomfield said.

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The hospital's emergency department was able to remain open while ambulances diverted to North Shore.

Auckland travel rules relaxed from tonight

Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern said travel restrictions relating to Auckland will be relaxed from 11.59pm tonight.

People will be able to travel from Auckland into a level 2 environment if they are relocating permanently, if they have shared caregiving arrangements and if they are returning from alert level 3 to an alert level 2 environment. People need a test 72 hours before departure.

Those with shared caregivers need a test within seven days of each crossing of the Auckland border. People need to carry proof of reason to travel and must not be sick.

Ardern said the Government hasn't considered compensation for those who lost money during lockdown, eg by delaying moving house across regions.

However case-by-case exemptions for funerals would need to remain, because they were still "high-risk environments", Ardern said.

3800 more MIQ rooms released tonight

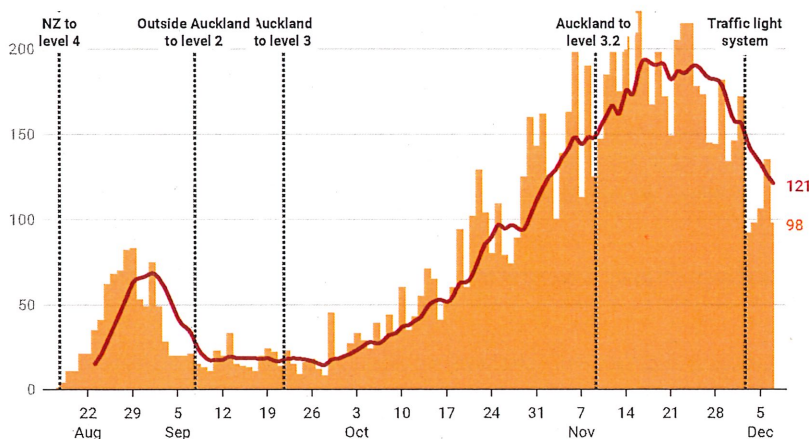
Ardern also revealed that an extra 3800 MIQ rooms will be released at tonight's online booking opportunity at 6pm.

These would be MIQ spots available for October, November and December.

More than 12,000 people could return for Christmas, with more rooms becoming available in coming weeks, Ardern said.

Daily new Covid-19 community cases

— 7-day average



Counts based on the Ministry of Health's daily 1pm update

Chart: Herald Network graphic • Source: Ministry of Health • Created with Datawrapper

She noted that was six weeks to the day since Delta was first reported in the Auckland community.

It's timely for many in Auckland to get their second vaccine dose, Ardern said.

She acknowledged it was getting harder to lift Auckland's vaccination rate.

The Government's priority was for Kiwis to have the best summer possible, Ardern said, which means working very hard to get our vaccination rates up.

Anything else added to the mix too soon could risk summer, she said.

Vaccination rates did not impact on alert level changes, Ardern said, but they impacted on the country's future.

"It is still critical for us transitioning away from lockdowns," she said.

Requiring vaccination certificates would be inappropriate for essential services such as healthcare and supermarkets, Ardern said.

She was not "willing to concede" that there will be low vaccination rates among Māori.

Positive wastewater result in Tauranga

A positive wastewater test result was recorded in Tauranga on September 23. Further samples taken from wider nearby area and results expected on Thursday.

Testing centres in the region will be open for extended hours today, and more pop-up clinics open tomorrow.

A request has been made for permitted workers over the next two weeks, regardless of symptoms, to get two tests at least five days apart - especially in the construction, hospitality and retail sectors.

Bloomfield said people in Tauranga should not be worried about the wastewater testing results.

The positive result was "too far down the track" to be connected to the truck driver who tested positive and visited Tauranga, Cambridge and Hamilton.

The chief executive of Bay of Plenty District Health Board is appealing for calm after the latest discovery of Covid traces in wastewater.

Peter Chandler told residents not to panic as details were scant. He advised people to social distance, wear masks, scan and get a test if they had symptoms.

Tamaki's plan for anti-lockdown protests

Ardern said she was aware that Destiny Church pastor Brian Tamaki [was planning anti-lockdown protests](#) and had met with Police Commissioner Andrew Coster.

She had confidence in police bosses using the "right judgment".

"No one wants a situation where people who regularly engage in the community, no one wants them separated longer than they need to be," Ardern said, noting that "no one likes lockdowns".

She said the Government is "desperate" to get rid of these restrictions, and as soon as it can remove them, it will.

Bloomfield said he was confident police will take the right approach to the organised protests.

The two current sub-clusters are groups of linked households and had a connection as people have been moving between those households.

The third sub cluster is associated with people in temporary accommodation arrangements. This was not emergency housing, but a boarding house was involved.

That cluster has emerged in the last week or two, Bloomfield said.

Locations of the sub-clusters are still largely in south Auckland.

Of the 14 people currently in hospital with Covid, three people are in ICU or a high dependency unit.

Testing continues across Auckland with a particular focus on Clover Park, Māngere, Favona, Ōtara, Manurewa and Mt Wellington/Sylvia Park.

Any workers travelling from Auckland to Tauranga should check they are up to date with testing.

More than 50,000 essential workers have been tested.

Yesterday there were 12 new cases, all in Auckland, with all but two of them epidemiologically linked.

In the past fortnight, there were seven unlinked cases.

Bloomfield said yesterday that the seven-day rolling average of Covid cases was now 15, compared with 17 last week and 19 the week before.

"We are making progress. Many of our clusters are now considered to be contained, or clusters are dormant," he said.

Auckland will be at level 3 for another week - until the end of Tuesday next week - with Cabinet meeting on Monday to review alert level settings for the whole country.

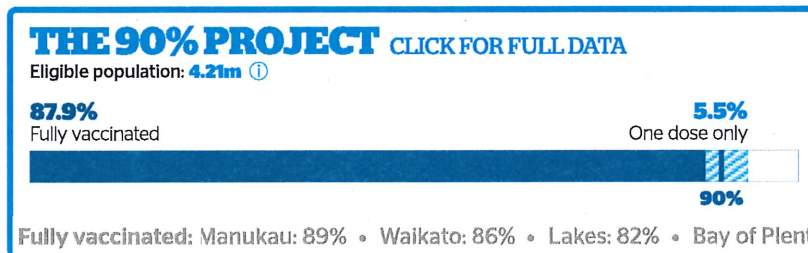
Daily case numbers tend to reflect what's happening in the community seven to 10 days ago, so the numbers today and for the rest of the week might indicate the impact of moving from level 4 to level 3.

'We are on a knife-edge at the moment'

Epidemiologist Professor Michael Baker said it was clear the virus was continuing to transmit among specific groups and there needed to be a much more targeted approach to stamping out the virus quickly.

"We are on a knife-edge at the moment."

Without a targeted approach, Baker said, Auckland could be hovering between level 2 and level 3 for some time.



Yesterday Ardern said 150 fully vaccinated travellers, starting from the end of October, will be involved in a pilot to isolate at home following an overseas trip.

It would be coupled with a testing and monitoring regime, and travellers wouldn't be able to leave their homes, or have anyone else there unless they too had travelled as part of the same party.

This morning Act Party leader David Seymour [called for an end to regional lockdowns](#), and for vaccinated Kiwis overseas to be able to come home by Christmas.

The party released its Covid 3.0 strategy this morning, which would take the focus away from zero cases and move towards harm minimisation.

This meant doing away with lockdowns as a whole and moving "from isolating whole cities to isolating only those who it makes sense to isolate".

To enable this there also needed to be a move away from "chronic fear and uncertainty" towards freedom; a shift away from government-knows-best towards openness and involving business; and an overall strategic shift away from public health to wellbeing.

The National Party is releasing its Covid-19 strategy tomorrow, but party leader Judith Collins said this morning that it would also [allow fully vaccinated Kiwis to come home by Christmas](#).

