

# Covid 19 coronavirus community cases: New Zealand lockdown - four new Delta cases including Auckland Hospital nurse

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(Neilson, 2021d)

August 18 2021 There are now seven Covid-19 cases in the community, with two additional cases to report from the five announced this morning. The outbreak is the Delta strain of the virus and it came from NSW, Australia.



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## COVID COMMUNITY CASE LATEST

- \* Level-4 lockdown begins - what you can and can't do
- \* 23 'exposure events' - the locations of interest released so far in Auckland, Coromandel, Thames
- \* '80-90' people in bar on nights Auckland man visited
- \* Derek Cheng: Why we should all be worried, and the signs of optimism to look for today
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There are four new community cases of Covid-19, including a fully vaccinated nurse at Auckland Hospital - all have the Delta variant and all are linked to the Devonport case that saw New Zealand enter a snap lockdown overnight.

Health officials are making immediate moves to try to reduce the risk of an outbreak at the hospital.

Covid-19 Response Minister Chris Hipkins said the four new cases were confirmed last night - a co-worker of the initial Devonport case and three close contacts of the co-worker.

The new cases include a fully vaccinated nurse from Auckland City Hospital, who was working in recent days.

The Prime Minister's Office has also confirmed it is the Delta strain of the virus.

Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern said the Devonport man was broadly speaking a "tradesperson" and - as well as 15 locations of interest already announced - seven other locations he has visited are private homes.

An email sent to Auckland District Health Board staff says a staff member - the nurse - has tested positive for Covid-19.

The email says the DHB is concerned about a "hospital outbreak" and it is taking "a number of precautions".

"We will be carrying out a detailed contact trace over the next day but in the meantime if you [staff members, not members of the public] have been in Ward 65 in the last five days please contact Occupational Health and get a Covid test."

The email asks staff to stay home if they have Covid symptoms and get tested. Staff are asked to wear masks at all times in clinical and non-clinical areas and be careful about hand hygiene.

"Please restrict your movements around the hospital. Ideally please go straight to your workplace and stay there. If you can work from home please do so."

The DHB is reducing the number of coffee and food outlets and removing seating in public spaces. Staff are asked to bring food from home to reduce hospital movements.

"The situation is likely to evolve over the next few days. We will provide frequent updates so you can understand what's happening and what it means for you."

The email is signed by Dr Mike Shepherd, interim director provider services.

Ardern told The AM Show the latest cases came through very late last night but any new locations of interest would be updated as soon as they became available.

Another restaurant has seemingly named itself as a location of interest this morning.

The Pepper Tree Restaurant & Bar, in Coromandel, says it has been told by health authorities to close immediately.

"We have been notified by the Auckland District Health Board that the positive Covid-19 case has travelled to Coromandel and dined in both Star and Garter [Hotel] and Pepper Tree.

"Along with several other businesses in Coro, we have been advised to shut immediately until we are advised what to do next."

Star and Garter Hotel is next door to Pepper Tree and has already been named as a location of interest by the Ministry of Health.

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Pepper Tree staff told its customers, via Facebook: "Those of you who visited us on Friday the 13th of August and Saturday the 14th of August at either premises need to self-isolate immediately and go for a Covid test."

There's been a huge response from Aucklanders eager to get a Covid-19 test this morning.

The line of people waiting to be tested at the Northcote testing centre is almost a kilometre long. It trails up College St, where the centre is located, onto Exmouth Rd, then around the roundabout and down Lake Rd up to Onepoto School.

In Devonport, almost 100 cars are backed up 600m down Seabreeze Rd, as people wait for a test. In total, about 140 cars are in line, including those in the Woodall Park carpark where testing is occurring.

Sharon, an essential worker from Devonport, had just joined the queue. She had been at the Northcote testing centre last night but was turned away due to high demand. She said about 40 cars would have been turned away with her.

One of the Auckland locations of interest identified by health authorities is opening its doors today.

The Devonport pharmacy is open and staff are serving people. A staff member told the Herald they were too busy to comment.

There was no signage that the pharmacy was a location of interest.

The Devonport Pharmacy told customers on a Facebook post this morning that it would be opening according to alert level 4 guidelines.

The post said four of the pharmacy's staff members are in isolation for 14 days after a Devonport man who tested positive for the virus visited the chemist on Monday afternoon.

They said they have a limited number of staff working at the moment as a result.

The pharmacy's operational hours are also being reduced and it will be closed on Sunday.

"We appreciate your help, patience and understanding during short-staffed two weeks period.

"Please stay home if feeling unwell and call / email us instead."

Deputy Prime Minister Grant Robertson said the four new cases were all close contacts of the Devonport case - he indicated some were people living with the man.

He told Newstalk ZB's Mike Hosking there was no known link with the Covid-positive UN worker who was recently flown to New Zealand from Fiji, in a medi-vac transfer.

Robertson said the vaccination programme was on a "brief pause" while the Government handled the immediate impact of the new cases. Arden said vaccine centres should re-open in less than 48 hours.

Robertson said the cost of a week-long lockdown was up to \$1.5 billion. "Overall this is still the best economic response."

The Reserve Bank's OCR announcement would still go ahead today.

Ardern told TVNZ all wastewater tests were clear except for the closest one to the Jet Park MIQ facility in Auckland. More wastewater testing would be carried out in the Coromandel.

"My very simple message: please stay at home," the Prime Minister appealed to the nation this morning. "Stick to your bubble, stay home."

Ardern said the government's hope was a high number of people being vaccinated, along with other public health measures such as contact tracing, would reduce the number of lockdowns going forward.

Ardern was confident New Zealand could beat Covid again by using the same tools before as long as everyone adhered to the rules. Her final message: "Stay safe everyone."

STORY CONTINUES AFTER BLOG

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Almost 70 bars, supermarkets, shops, eateries, theatres, chemists are linked to New Zealand's Covid-scene.

Health officials have so far tracked down 10 cases of the virus in the outbreak and the list of exposure sites continues to grow.

The earliest exposure site is now pinpointed to be Sumthin Dumpllin in Auckland's city centre, right back on Tuesday, August 3.

Updated: 4 months ago

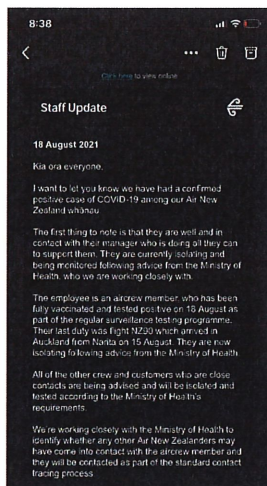
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Steven Holloway

An Air New Zealand crew member has tested positive today. Chief Operational Integrity & Safety Officer David Morgan advised staff tonight that the employee was fully vaccinated and tested positive as part of the regular surveillance testing programme. Their last duty was flight NZ90 which arrived in Auckland from Narita on August 15. They are now isolating.

All other crew and customers who are close contacts are being advised and will isolate and tested according to the Ministry of Health's requirements, Morgan said.

"We're working closely with the Ministry of Health to identify whether any other Air New Zealanders may have come into contact with the aircrew member and they will be contacted as part of the standard contact tracing process."



STORY CONTINUES

Chris Hipkins told ZM it was reassuring that contact tracers were working at speed to identify the chain of transmission, where the virus came from and where it had spread to.

"The faster we do that the faster we get out of it."

One of the new cases was a fully vaccinated Auckland Hospital nurse, "so Auckland Hospital will be putting a few extra protections in place to make sure there's no spread of the virus in the hospital to make sure they're ring fencing the risk as well".

"We know it's the delta variant we're dealing with. We don't yet know where the linkage may be."

Experts were now going through New Zealand and Australian genome sequencing databases in a bid to identify where the infection had originated.

Locations of interest would be updated throughout the morning. "Obviously having four new cases means there will be four new lots of locations of interest. So people can expect to see that list of locations of interest growing quite a bit."

"We do want people who have been at those locations of interest to monitor really closely to see if they get any symptoms and if they do start to show any symptoms or if they're worried to go and get a test."

Contact tracers were working to verify information before updating the locations of interest webpage. Hipkins said the initial case was very good at scanning with the Covid tracer app. "That speeds it up."

"The last thing we want to do is send people on a wild goose chase by putting out wrong information."

On the prospect of mandatory mask use and scanning, Hipkins said there will be places people have to scan in, "and there will be wider use of masks at alert level 2 and above". Details would be released later today.

"My guidance to people this morning is if you're leaving home and you're going to be anywhere where there's other people, wear a mask.

"If you're going to the supermarket wear a mask. If you're going to the supermarket to fill up your car, wear a mask." People out for a run were not required to wear a facial covering, Hipkins said.

Extra testing facilities would be popping up all over the country. There were also plans for "surge testing". "The more tests we can do, particularly people who are showing any symptoms at all, the quicker we will be able to get on top of this."

On the fully vaccinated Auckland Hospital nurse who has contracted the virus, Hipkins said one of the challenges was that even people who had received both doses of the vaccine could become infected.

"My understanding was this person wasn't showing any symptoms.

"It is possible we're going to pick up cases of people who don't show symptoms." Using the Covid tracer app and getting a test if you felt unwell would help "run down this virus" and prevent it spreading in the community.

State Highway 25 at Manaia, on the Coromandel Peninsula remains closed this morning, according to residents.

A local resident posted on a Facebook page that traffic flow towards Manaia "has slowed right down".

"Manaia bridge is still closed and will be for as long as it takes to secure our communities health," the resident wrote about 7.45am today.

Concerned residents blocked the road late last night after hearing about that the Covid-19 positive Devonport resident, and his wife, travelled to Coromandel town on Friday.

Anyone using the road is being asked by locals for their essential workers certificate or proof of residence to get through, sparking tense scenes last night.



## Test results due

Test results expected earlier this morning will be critical in determining how the 58-year-old Devonport man got Covid-19 after health officials were unable to identify any obvious links to the border.

Auckland and Coromandel have gone into level 4 lockdown for seven days – and the rest of the country for three days – following a community Covid-19 case in New Zealand's biggest city.

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It is the first full lockdown in more than a year, and has seen a "return of the bubble", limited travel, a 48-hour amnesty for people to return to their homes, and a 48-hour pause on vaccinations.

The Devonport man, 58, returned a positive test on Tuesday, and is believed to have been infectious since August 12. He and his wife travelled to Coromandel township on Friday and stayed for the weekend, before the man developed symptoms and on Monday sought a test.

There are 23 "exposure events" linked to the man -15 have so far been released as locations of interest - meaning they require further contact tracing. These locations include 12 in the Coromandel, 2 in Auckland and 1 in Mangatarata.

His wife had been fully vaccinated and returned a negative test. The man himself was eligible to be vaccinated, but had issues booking an appointment through the online system.

Both had been self-isolating at home but were being transferred to Jet Park quarantine facility.

Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern said there was no known link to the border or any other cases thus far which, coupled with an assumption he had the highly-infectious Delta variant, was behind the decision to plunge the country back into full lockdown for the first time in more than a year.

Every case of Covid-19 picked up at the border over the past three weeks had been Delta.

New Zealand had seen what had occurred around the world in outbreaks of this new variant, which was twice as infectious and led to higher rates of hospitalisations and deaths, particularly across the Tasman in New South Wales, Ardern said.

Delta was a "game-changer" and there needed to be a rapid response to stop the spread.

"We only get one chance. One of the worst things about Covid-19 is the absolute uncertainty it creates, but we know this strategy works, and we know life will get easier. We just need to keep going."

The three-day nationwide lockdown was to get various test results, identify contacts and the spread, and find any undetected cases. Auckland and Coromandel would most likely be in lockdown for seven days due to the proximity of the case, Ardern said.

Level 4 means schools and all education centres will be closed. Non-essential workers need to stay home, and everybody needs to keep to their "bubbles".

People should only leave their homes to buy essential items, and for exercise in their immediate neighbourhoods.

Masks were not mandatory, but Ardern said people were strongly encouraged to wear them at all times outside their bubbles and maintain at least a two-metre distance with others.

Delta could be spread, as in Sydney, by people simply passing each other in the street.

An announcement on mandatory mask measures was expected within 24 hours, Ardern said.

There would be a 48-hour period during which people could return to their homes, she said.

For up to 48 hours vaccinations would also be paused. This was to prepare the sites to be able to carry them out safely, Ardern said.

There were 23 locations of interest identified - 13 in the Coromandel Peninsula and 10 in Auckland.

The Government has not released the number of contacts, of which there are potentially hundreds.

About 70-80 people alone were in Star and Garter Bar in Coromandel township on each night the man visited over the weekend - including to watch the All Blacks game on Saturday.

Manager Mariya Kravchenko said the hotel closed just before 6pm yesterday, saying staff had been told to follow the guidelines and get a Covid test.

National Party leader Judith Collins said she supported the quick move to lockdown given the transmissibility of the Delta variant.

"It is better to act now to stamp out the spread of Covid-19 than to take half measures which do not work and result in it taking longer to shut down the spread."

Both Collins and Act leader David Seymour said it was crucial vaccinations began again as soon as possible, given the low level of coverage in New Zealand and the harm Delta had done in countries with even fairly high levels of vaccination.

Auckland Mayor Phil Goff said the Government had made the right decision but understood it would be hard on the community and businesses.

"To successfully contain the spread of the virus everyone has to play their part and follow the rules.

"We have a collective responsibility to each other, and it is unacceptable for anyone out of selfish reasons to put themselves, their families and their communities at risk."

Council facilities such as libraries, leisure centres and pools, the museum, zoo, halls, playgrounds and public toilets would be closed.

Auckland Transport would continue its core services for essential workers, but passengers needed to socially distance and wear masks.

Other essential council services would continue.

Finance Minister Grant Robertson said a week-long level 4 lockdown had been estimated to cost the economy \$1.4b.

The wage subsidy support had been triggered given the lockdown would last seven days. Businesses that met the criteria could apply from Friday.

The resurgence support scheme was also available.

Following news of the lockdown, the New Zealand Nurses Organisation (NZNO) called off a planned strike over pay and conditions for Thursday, saying people's health and wellbeing had to "remain our number one priority".