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Covid-19: Fears of virus spread after Brian Tamaki's anti-lockdown protest in Auckland

Caroline Williams · 18:31, Oct 02 2021



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Destiny Church leader Brian Tamaki addressed thousands of anti-lockdown protesters at a protest at the Auckland Domain on October 2. He attended a second event on October 16, but maintains he did not organise either (first published October 30).

Thousands have gathered at Auckland Domain for Destiny Church leader Brian Tamaki's protest against Covid-19 restrictions.

It's led to fears the event will lead to the virus spreading further, two days ahead of a Government decision on whether to move Auckland to alert level 2.

The protest, organised by the Freedoms and Rights Coalition of which Tamaki is a member, began at 11am and was attended by motorcyclists and families with children, who set up picnic blankets on the grass.



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While some in attendance were wearing masks, it appeared social distancing was not adhered to.

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Thousands of people – including children and families – are gathered at Auckland Domain.

Police were monitoring the protest.

They said in a statement while they respected people's lawful right to protest, they would take enforcement action against those who breached [Covid-19 alert level 3 restrictions](#).

"Under level 3 restrictions the only gatherings allowed are weddings, funerals and tangihanga with no more than 10 people," a spokeswoman said in a statement.

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Auckland Council director of customer and community services Dr Claudia Wyss said the council did not permit, support or endorse the event.

"While we respect people's rights to peaceful protest, we have serious concerns that the gathering may result in the spread of Covid-19 and risk the health of Aucklanders."



LAWRENCE SMITH/STUFF

Requests from Auckland Council that protest organisers respect the museum, cenotaph and Court of Honour seem to have been ignored.

In a letter to event organisers, the council's general counsel Helen Wild said it feared for the health of attendees and any damage the motorcycles may cause to Auckland Domain grounds, which are of strategic value to the local community.

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enjoy, very seriously and we want to create a clear expectation that damage to the site will not be tolerated."

Wild also said the cenotaph and Court of Honour in front of the Auckland War Memorial Museum was sacred land used to remember those who died in war.

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The event was organised by the Freedom and Rights Coalition, of which Destiny Church leader Brian Tamaki is a member.

"The council expects that you will not use this area on Saturday and that you will take active steps to prevent any behaviour that is not consistent with the importance and nature of this site," she wrote.

Stuff understands this request was ignored and caused some angst for museum staff.

The museum declined to comment.

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Police said they would take enforcement action against anyone breaching Covid-19 alert level 3 restrictions.

After the protest, some locals reported a number of motorcyclists running red lights and driving on the wrong side of the road.

Auckland councillors have also asked why police did not take more of an active role in enforcing the level 3 rules.

"[Auckland's] mayor and councillors had [a] meeting with police district commanders in which I sent them the posters advertising the protests today, why no enforcement plz?" councillor Jo Bartley tweeted.



A number of motorcyclists in Auckland, as part of a protest in Auckland against Covid-19 restrictions, led by Destiny Church leader Brian Tamaki. Auckland is under level 3 restrictions.

"Should have arrested them or fined them breaching level 3 let alone shoving all of our sacrifices in our faces."

Councillor Shane Henderson tweeted it seemed enforcement of alert level breaches was being "unevenly applied", and he was not sure why a fine, at least, was not imposed.

Police have been approached for further comment.

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Thousands of people were at the protest, many of whom were not wearing masks.

It comes after eight people, including conspiracy theorist [Billy Te Kahika](#), were [arrested during protests around New Zealand](#) in August.

He was charged with intentionally failing to comply with the alert level 4 requirements by organising and attending a gathering. He has [denied the charges](#).

In Australia, [more than 250 people were arrested](#) in August after large anti-lockdown protests that saw police officers allegedly assaulted.

LAWRENCE SMITH/STUFF

The event was advertised as a peaceful, family friendly event.

Officers in Victoria used pepper spray on several people, saying in a statement they were left with no choice.

Meanwhile, a New South Wales police officer was hospitalised for head and neck injuries, authorities said.

This Auckland article didn't write itself.

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