

Covid 19: Expert modeller predicts Omicron outbreak could occur in '18 days not 180'

6 Jan, 2022 05:15 PM

(Burrell, 2022)

There are 19 new Covid-19 cases in the community today and 43 new cases at the border to report. Video / NZ Herald

**By Miriam Burrell**

Multimedia Journalist - NZ Herald

[VIEW PROFILE](#)

A Covid-19 modelling expert says New Zealanders could expect an Omicron outbreak to occur in around 18 days if cases of the variant at MIQ continue to skyrocket.

The risk of Omicron entering the community is "very high" as daily cases at the border overtake the number of new cases in the community, University of Canterbury Professor Michael Plank said.

There were 43 new cases detected at the border today, up from 23 yesterday. This is compared with 19 new community cases.

Although health officials are still waiting on genome sequencing results to confirm how many border cases are of the Omicron variant, "the likelihood is that Omicron will continue to be the most prevalent variant at our borders", the Ministry of Health said.

Plank said MIQ cases are now up by a factor of >10 compared with last year, and if that continues New Zealanders might expect the "next outbreak to occur in 18 days rather than 180 days".

"The 18 days is not to be taken literally, or to be taken with a very large pinch of salt, because it's impossible to predict exactly when that would happen," he told the Herald.