

# TIMELINE OF SIGNIFICANT COVID-19 EVENTS AND KEY ALL-OF-GOVERNMENT RESPONSE ACTIVITIES

A timeline covering the period from January 2020 to October 2022 that captures:

- Significant global and domestic events that impacted Aotearoa New Zealand's coordinated government response to COVID-19.
- Key All-of-Government (AoG) and public sector activities that contributed to Aotearoa New Zealand's response to the pandemic.

CATEGORY	ALERT LEVELS
● All-of-Government (AoG) coordination	● Level 1
● Border	● Level 2
● Development of pandemic	● Level 3
● Public information campaign associated	● Level 4
● Government support initiatives	
● Domestic response	
● Legislative and regulatory	
● Vaccination	
● Advisory groups	

  

COVID-19 PROTECTION FRAMEWORK
● Green
● Orange
● Red

## 2020

6 Jan: World Health Organisation (WHO) reported a cluster of cases of pneumonia of unknown cause in Wuhan, China

24 Jan: Ministry of Health (MoH) convened the Intersectoral Pandemic Group

27 Jan: New Zealand Customs Service (Customs) convened the Border Working Group

27 Jan: Officials Committee for Domestic and External Security Coordination (ODESC) system activated and Watch Group convened, signalling a significant event of concern for New Zealand (NZ)

28 Jan: Public health staff began meeting flights arriving into NZ from China

28 Jan: National Health Coordination Centre activated

31 Jan: Director-General of WHO declared the novel coronavirus to be a public health emergency of international concern, WHO's highest level of alarm

ODESC met for first time regarding the novel coronavirus, and MoH confirmed as lead agency for the response (in accordance with the NZ Influenza Pandemic Plan - 2017)

2 Feb: Ministers with Power to Act agreed to place restrictions on entry into NZ for travellers arriving from or through China

5 Feb: NZ Government-chartered repatriation flight from Wuhan landed in NZ

21 Feb: Retrospectively identified first COVID-19 case in NZ

27 Feb: Ministers with Power to Act agreed to place restrictions on entry into NZ for travellers arriving from or through Iran

28 Feb: NZ's first COVID-19 case announced

29 Feb: Contact tracing began for positive COVID-19 cases in NZ

Public health staff began meeting direct flights arriving into NZ from other countries in East Asia

1 Apr: Second National Action Plan issued

2 Apr: 89 new cases of COVID-19 announced in NZ (significant peak in daily COVID-19 cases)

7 Apr: MoH produced overview of NZ's COVID-19 elimination strategy

9 Apr: All international arrivals to NZ required to undertake Managed Isolation and Quarantine (MIQ), effective immediately

10 Apr: Expiry dates for driver licenses, vehicle warrants of fitness and registrations extended

14 Apr: First meeting of Caring for our Communities workstream, led by the Chief Executive of Te Arawhiti – the Office for Māori Crown Relations, to give welfare support to vulnerable or hard to reach people (including engagement with iwi)

22 Apr: Third National Action Plan issued

23 Apr: First Rapid Review of the National Response to COVID-19 finalised

30 Apr: Contact Tracing Assurance Committee (CTAC) established

8 Jun: No active cases of COVID-19 in NZ announced

Notice given of termination of national transition period

28 Jun: Review of MIQ end-to-end processes released

30 Jun: NCMC deactivated

1 Jul: DPMC COVID-19 AoG Response Group established, including continued coordination of the Caring for our Communities workstream

13 Jul: Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment (MBIE) assumed responsibility for MIQ

15 Jul: 'Stamp It Out' plan for responding to new cases of COVID-19 in the community announced

6 Sep: Mandatory testing of all border workers commenced

5 Oct: Managed Isolation Allocation System (MIAS) allowing people to book a place in MIQ before travel launched

7 Oct: No active community cases of COVID-19 in NZ announced

12 Oct: First COVID-19 vaccine purchase agreement signed: Pfizer/BioNTech (1.5 million doses)

30 Oct: Second Rapid Review of COVID-19 AoG response finalised

2 Nov: Minister for COVID-19 Response announced

17 Nov: First meeting of COVID-19 Chief Executives' Board (CCB)

18 Nov: Masks made mandatory on Auckland public transport and all domestic flights

21 Mar NZ AL2

23 Mar NZ AL3

25 Mar NZ AL4

27 Apr NZ AL3

14 May NZ AL2

8 Jun NZ AL1

12 Aug NZ AL2 Auckland AL3

30 Aug Auckland AL2.5

23 Sep Auckland AL2

7 Oct Auckland AL1

21 Sep NZ AL1 except Auckland

2 Mar: Ministers with Power to Act agreed that arrivals from Northern Italy and South Korea must self-isolate for 14 days

5 Mar: First table-top COVID-19 planning exercise held by the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet (DPMC)

6 Mar: National Crisis Management Centre (NCMC) activated

31 Mar: WHO declared COVID-19 a pandemic

AoG Controller appointed and leadership team (the 'Quin') established

COVID-19.govt.nz website launched

14 Mar: Cruise ships banned from entering NZ territorial waters

16 Mar: Self-isolation requirements for all arrivals into NZ (except from the Pacific) came into effect

17 Mar: \$12.1 billion economic support package (wage subsidy, leave support etc.) announced

18 Mar: First National Action Plan issued and AoG workstreams initiated

Unite against COVID-19 (UAC) public information campaign and channels launched (including press, TV and radio, website, social media, and digital newsletters)

19 Mar: NZ's border closed, except to returning New Zealanders and associated people, effective the same day

Indoor gatherings limited to 100 people

Aviation relief package announced

20 Mar: COVID-19 Operations Command Centre stood up (NCMC South)

21 Mar: Four-stage Alert Level (AL) system announced

24 Mar: National contact tracing workforce stood up (National Close Contact Service)

Essential Services framework confirmed by Cabinet

25 Mar: Cabinet agreed that arrivals into NZ, if symptomatic, will be placed in a managed isolation facility. All others must self-isolate

State of national emergency declared

Epidemic Preparedness Notice 2020 came into effect

All education facilities closed

29 Mar: First NZ COVID-19-related death

31 Mar: Parliament's Epidemic Response Committee holds first meeting (disestablished on 26/5/20)

4 May: No new cases of COVID-19 announced in NZ for the first time since Alert Level 4 began

13 May: COVID-19 Public Health Response Act 2020 came into effect

State of national emergency expired and notice given of national transition period

National Certificate of Educational Achievement (NCEA) exam dates changed to mitigate impact of COVID-19 disruption on students

14 May: \$50 billion COVID-19 Response and Recovery Fund (CRRF) announced

20 May: NZ COVID Tracer app released to support contact tracing

26 May: COVID-19 Vaccine Strategy announced and NZ COVID-19 Vaccine Taskforce established

1 Aug: 'Be Ready' public information campaign launched to encourage New Zealanders to prepare for future outbreaks of COVID-19

9 Aug: 100 days without community transmission of COVID-19 observed in NZ

10 Aug: Establishment of National Response Leadership Team (NRLT) and National Response Group (NRG) agreed by Cabinet

11 Aug: First case of community transmission of COVID-19 observed in NZ after 102 days of no community transmission (developed into an outbreak of cases, centred in Auckland)

17 Aug: General Election date postponed to 17 October 2020

19 Aug: Businesses and workplaces required to display NZ COVID Tracer QR code posters

26 Aug: Advisory committee to oversee the implementation of the COVID-19 Surveillance Plan and Testing Strategy announced

30 Aug: Face coverings made mandatory for people aged 12+ on public transport and aircraft under Alert Level 2 and above

2 Dec: DPMC COVID-19 Response Unit ('COVID-19 Group') confirmed as a business unit within DPMC

13 Dec: 'Make Summer Unstoppable' public information campaign launched

17 Dec: COVID-19 Surveillance Plan and Testing Strategy report released

## 2021

15 Jan: Arrivals to NZ from the United Kingdom (UK) or United States (US) required to have negative COVID-19 test before departure

18 Jan: Arrivals from most countries (excluding Australia, Antarctica, and some Pacific nations) required to undergo Day 0/1 testing on arrival in NZ

20 Jan: Quarantine Free Travel (QFT) from Pacific commenced with Cook Islands (other Pacific locations were added later)

25 Jan: Pre-departure testing requirements introduced for arrivals into NZ from most countries (excluding Australia, Antarctica and most Pacific nations)

9 Mar: COVID-19 Independent Continuous Review, Improvement and Advice Group (CICRIAG) announced

10 Mar: Sequencing plan for nation-wide vaccine roll-out announced

24 Mar: Niue one-way QFT commenced

26 Mar: Vaccination rollout began for group 2 (frontline health workers)

Business Leaders' Forum held first COVID-19 engagement meeting

31 Mar: First case of Delta variant of COVID-19 in NZ identified in MIQ facility

6 May: QFT paused for New South Wales

9 May: QFT recommenced for New South Wales

16 May: Cook Islands two-way QFT commenced

17 May: Vaccination rollout began for group 3 (people aged 65+)

20 May: \$1 billion invested into whānau Māori wellbeing to assist economic and social recovery from the effects of COVID-19

25 May: QFT paused for Victoria

4 Jul: QFT recommenced for Queensland

9 Jul: Queensland managed return flights recommenced

QFT recommenced for Northern Territory and Western Australia

Public information campaign 'Scanning protects what we love' launched to encourage people to scan in using the NZ COVID Tracer app

12 Jul: QFT recommenced for Queensland

13 Jul: New South Wales managed return flights commenced

16 Jul: QFT paused for Victoria

20 Jul: QFT paused for South Australia

23 Jul: Trans-Tasman QFT suspended

28 Jul: Vaccination rollout began for group 4 (general population, staggered by age groups)

30 Jul: Managed return flights from Australia cease

15 Sep: Virtual lobby for MIQ voucher allocation introduced

17 Sep: UAC website recorded more than 20 million page views and 4.6 million users in the past month

20 Sep: MIQ vouchers via first virtual lobby released

23 Sep: CICRIAG observations on the Delta outbreak and the impact on reconnecting New Zealanders submitted

30 Sep: All border workers required to have had first dose of COVID-19 vaccine

8 Oct: SPHAG strategy for a highly vaccinated NZ presented

Discussions held with National Iwi Chairs' Forum Pandemic Response Group on a draft of the COVID-19 Protection Framework (CPF)

13 Oct: My COVID Record website launched

Intensive multi-day engagement between iwi/Māori leaders and Cabinet Ministers undertaken on CPF

NZ-wide vaccine drive 'Super Saturday' held (led by MoH and supported by UAC channels)

18 Oct: Cabinet agreed to replace the Alert Level system with the CPF ('Traffic Lights') and agreed, in principle, that the move would be triggered by each NZ District Health Board achieving 90% full vaccination of its eligible population

22 Oct: Public announcement of Cabinet decision to move to CPF once 90% vaccination targets achieved

\$120 million Māori Communities COVID-19 Fund announced to support Māori vaccination rates and iwi-led initiatives to protect their communities

1 Nov: Full vaccination required for non-New Zealand citizens arriving into NZ

6 Nov: All Corrections workers required to have had first dose of vaccine (full vaccination required by 8/1/22)

8 Nov: One-way QFT commenced with Samoa, Tonga and Vanuatu

14 Nov: MIQ reduced to 7 days followed by home isolation for arrivals into NZ

15 Nov: Health and disability, and education workers required to be vaccinated (full vaccination required by 1/1/22)

22 Nov: 222 new community cases of COVID-19 in NZ announced (significant peak in daily COVID-19 cases)

17 Nov: Domestic vaccination pass requirements introduced and NZ International Travel Vaccination Certificate available

22 Nov: Cabinet rescinded the decision, in principle, relating to the 90% vaccination targets and agreed, in principle, that NZ would transition to the CPF on 21/2/21

23 Nov: 'My Vaccine Pass' public information campaign launched to encourage those who were fully vaccinated to request and use their pass

24 Nov: Next steps for Reconnecting New Zealanders announced

25 Nov: New testing and contact tracing strategy announced

27 Nov: WHO identified Omicron as a COVID-19 variant of concern

29 Nov: Traffic light colours announced for each area of NZ under CPF, and public engagement and information campaign launched to support the introduction of the framework

Vaccine booster doses became available

17 Feb NZ AL1 Auckland AL2

28 Feb NZ AL2 Auckland AL3

12 Mar Auckland AL1

14 Feb NZ AL2 Auckland AL3

22 Feb Auckland AL1

7 Mar NZ AL1 Auckland AL2

23 Jun Auckland AL2

29 Jun Wellington AL1

17 Aug NZ AL4

31 Aug NZ AL3 Northland AL4

7 Sep NZ AL2 Auckland AL4

25 Sep Upper Hauraki AL2 Auckland AL3

8 Oct Northland AL3

19 Oct Northland AL2

11 Nov Upper Northland AL2

2 Sep Northland AL3

21 Sep Auckland and Upper Hauraki AL3

3 Oct Raglan, Te Kauhātanga, Huntly, Ngāruahia, Hamilton City AL3

7 Oct Waikato AL3 boundary was extended to include the Waipa, Otorohanga, and Waitomo districts in that area

2 Nov Upper Northland AL3

16 Nov Raglan, Te Kauhātanga, Huntly, Ngāruahia, Hamilton City, Waitomo District, including Te Kūiti, Waipa District and Otorohanga District AL2

2 Dec Northland, Auckland, Taupō, Rotorua Lakes, Kawerau, Whakatāne, Opōtiki, Gisborne, Waioara, Rangitikei, Whanganui, and Ruapehu districts moved to Red. The rest of the North Island, and the South Island, moved to Orange

30 Dec Auckland, Taupō, Rotorua Lakes, Kawerau, Whakatāne, Opōtiki, Gisborne, Waioara, Rangitikei, Whanganui, and Ruapehu districts moved to Orange. Northland remained at Red

3 Feb: First COVID-19 vaccine (Pfizer/BioNTech) provisional approval announced

14 Feb: Three new community cases of COVID-19 announced in NZ (developed into a cluster of 15 cases centred in Papatoetoe, Auckland)

15 Feb: Public information messaging updates provided for Alert Level and boundary changes

19 Feb: First batch of COVID-19 vaccine (Pfizer/BioNTech) arrived in NZ

20 Feb: Vaccination rollout began in NZ with frontline vaccinators as the first recipients of a COVID-19 vaccine

20 Feb: Vaccination rollout began for group 1A (border and MIQ workforce)

22 Feb: First meeting of Modelling Governance Group

23 Feb: Office of the Auditor-General announced a performance audit of the AoG response (mainly DPMC) to COVID-19 (report released on 13/12/22)

8 Apr: Strategic COVID-19 Public Health Advisory Group (SPHAG) announced

11 Apr: Entry into NZ temporarily suspended for travellers from India

19 Apr: Trans-Tasman QFT commenced

23 Apr: QFT paused for Western Australia

28 Apr: Travel restrictions placed on arrivals into NZ from Very High Risk Countries (VHRC)

QFT recommenced for Western Australia

30 Apr: All border and MIQ workers required to be vaccinated (full vaccination required by 5/6/21)

1 Jun: WHO identified Delta as a COVID-19 variant of concern

4 Jun: CICRIAG Rapid Review of Auckland February 2021 outbreak completed

8 Jun: Melbourne managed return flights commenced for NZ citizens and Australian citizens that normally reside in NZ

10 Jun: SPHAG advice to Associate Minister of Health (Public Health) on future of the elimination strategy presented

17 Jun: Updated sequencing plan for vaccine roll-out to general population announced

22 Jun: QFT recommenced for Victoria

QFT paused for New South Wales

24 Jun: SPHAG advice on phased reopening of NZ borders presented

26 Jun: QFT paused for Australia

3 Aug: Community Panel (COVID-19 engagement, including iwi/Māori perspectives) held first meeting

11 Aug: SPHAG advice on next phase of reopening borders released

12 Aug: 'Reconnecting New Zealanders' programme for re-opening NZ's borders announced at Wellington forum

17 Aug: First case of the Delta variant in the community announced (developed into a widespread outbreak of Delta, initially centred in Auckland)

AoG response to the Delta variant commenced

UAC website and social media posts updated with all relevant Delta and Alert Level change messaging

18 Aug: Mandatory requirement for everyone aged 12+ to wear masks when visiting essential services introduced

22 Aug: Mandatory record keeping / sign in for most events and businesses announced

2 Sep: DPC replaced the Alert Level system

6 Dec: Waitangi Tribunal COVID-19 hearings began

12 Dec: Border exemptions for agricultural workers approved

13 Dec: Border exemptions for specialist technology workers approved

15 Dec: SPHAG provided future-focussed advice on scenarios that NZ may face in 2022 regarding the ongoing COVID-19 response

16 Dec: First case of Omicron COVID-19 variant at the border (MIQ) announced

Full vaccination of 90% of eligible New Zealanders achieved

20 Dec: Waitangi Tribunal released Haumarū: the COVID-19 Priority Report

21 Dec: Plan to minimise risk from the Omicron variant announced

29 Dec: First case of Omicron variant in the community announced

15 Feb: 55 million Rapid Antigen Tests (RATs) confirmed for delivery, or available, over next 2 months

3 Feb: Boosters and increased mask use required for Omicron

8 Feb: Parliament Grounds anti-vaccination/mandate occupation began

10 Feb: Omicron contact exemption scheme established for vaccinated critical services workers (must return negative RAT test) and those able to work in a bubble of one, effective from Phase 2 of Omicron response plan

11 Feb: 10 million COVID-19 vaccine doses administered in NZ

15 Feb: NZ moved to Phase 2 of the Omicron response plan

1,160 new community cases of COVID-19 in NZ announced (first time the daily increase in case numbers exceeded 1,000 cases)

24 Feb: NZ moved to Phase 3 of the Omicron response plan

RATs became the primary form of testing in the community

27 Feb: Reconnecting New Zealanders Step 1 implemented: fully vaccinated New Zealanders and other currently eligible travellers from Australia able to travel to NZ and, instead of going into MIQ, must self-isolate

QFT with Tonga suspended (testing and self-isolation requirements phased in from 15/2/22)

QFT extended to include Nauru, Tuvalu and American Samoa

SPHAG presented advice on the relaxation of border restrictions

4 Apr: Vaccination requirements removed for most businesses and venues

8 Apr: Requirement introduced that all travellers from Pacific nations (excluding Niue, Tokelau and Tuvalu) must test on arrival

12 Apr: Reconnecting New Zealanders Step 3 implemented: border exceptions further expanded to include an international student cohort of up to 5,000 students

QFT for vaccinated Australians commenced

20 Jun: Pre-departure test requirements removed for travellers to NZ

27 Jun: Government outlined plans for future COVID-19 variants of concern

30 Jun: Final MIQ facilities closed

30 Jun: Border workers no longer required to test

4 Aug: Ongoing coordination of COVID-19 health sector functions began to transition from DPMC to other (mainly response function) agencies

9 Aug: AoG COVID-19 system readiness exercise in response to a variant of concern conducted to ensure that the system remains ready to respond

12 Aug: First cruise ship in over two years entered NZ

## 2022

14 Jan: QFT with Cook Islands resumed

New Zealand Police and New Zealand Defence Force required to be vaccinated (full vaccination required by 1/3/22)

Vaccination for children aged 5-11 began

26 Jan: Three-phase public health response to Omicron introduced, and public information and engagement campaign in place to assist the transition to a new way of operating under Omicron

27 Jan: In response to Omicron, three Ministerial forums for iwi/Māori engagement were held with: the National Iwi Chairs; other iwi/Māori leaders; and national Māori organisations (further regular meetings were scheduled as part of a revised approach to Crown-iwi/Māori engagement)

2 Mar: Parliament Grounds anti-vaccination/mandate occupation ended

Self-isolation no longer required on entry into NZ for vaccinated travellers from Australia

4 Mar: Part of Reconnecting New Zealanders Step 2 implemented early: fully vaccinated New Zealanders and eligible travellers could enter NZ from anywhere in the world and self-isolate on arrival

8 Mar: 23,894 new community cases of COVID-19 in NZ announced (significant peak in daily COVID-19 cases)

11 Mar: Self-isolation period for domestic cases reduced from 10 to 7 days

13 Mar: SPHAG provided advice on vaccine mandates

Reconnecting New Zealanders Step 2 fully implemented: expanded border exceptions for critical workers, skilled workers earning at least 1.5 times the median wage, and highly skilled workers' family members who may have been separated from families

18 Mar: QFT for all NZ citizens began

24 Mar: MIQ voucher booking system ended

31 Mar: NZ (International) Traveller Declaration requirements for all travellers in place

1 May: QFT for vaccinated visa waiver travellers from certain countries commenced e.g US, UK, Japan, Germany, South Korea and Singapore

5 May: Reconnecting New Zealanders Step 4 implemented: borders were opened to travellers from Australia, visitors from visa-waiver countries, and the new Accredited Employer Work Visa

Unvaccinated residence class visa holders able to enter NZ

20 May: CICRIAG provided advice on lessons from the Omicron response to inform the future

22 Jul: Vaccine mandates ended for border and Corrections workers

14 Jul: New measures announced to tackle COVID-19 (including medicines, expanded access to free RATs and masks, and second booster shots)

31 Jul: Reconnecting New Zealanders Step 5 implemented: all visa categories reopened, except those that are paused

All NZ borders became fully open (two months early)

12 Sep: CPF ended

26 Sep: All vaccine mandates ended

20 Oct: Epidemic Preparedness (COVID-19) Notice 2020 expired

20 Jan Northland moved to Orange

23 Jan All NZ moved to Red

13 Apr All NZ moved to Orange

20 Jan: First case of Omicron COVID-19 variant at the border (MIQ) announced

Full vaccination of 90% of eligible New Zealanders achieved

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QFT with Tonga suspended (testing and self-isolation requirements phased in from 15/2/22)

QFT extended to include Nauru, Tuvalu and American Samoa

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