

Office of the Minister for COVID-19 Response

Cabinet

## COVID-19 RESPONSE: 1 NOVEMBER REVIEW OF ALERT LEVEL SETTINGS

### Proposal

- 1 This paper seeks Cabinet's agreement to:
  - 1.1 keep Auckland at the current Alert Level 3 settings (the first stage of the three-stage reduction); and
  - 1.2 keep the rest of New Zealand (excluding parts of the Waikato) at Alert Level 2.
- 2 I also propose Cabinet decide whether to keep parts of the Waikato at the current Alert Level 3 (the first stage of the three-stage reduction), informed by an updated public health risk assessment on Sunday 31 October and an oral update today from the Director-General of Health.
- 3 I propose Cabinet review these settings on Monday 15 November.

### Relation to government priorities

- 4 This paper concerns the Government's response to COVID-19.

### Summary

- 5 As at 9am Sunday 31 October, there have been 3,348 community cases detected since 17 August 2021, of which 3,195 are in Auckland, 118 in the Waikato, 17 in Wellington, 12 in Northland, 5 in Canterbury and 1 in Blenheim. There were 143 new cases identified in the community in the 24 hours to 9am Sunday 31 October – 135 in Auckland, 6 in the Waikato, and 2 in Northland.
- 6 The public health risk assessment undertaken on Thursday 28 October notes a high risk of community transmission in Auckland. The 7-day rolling average of cases since the previous risk assessment on 13 October has increased from 38 to 89 as at 9am Thursday 28 October. Over the past month cases have dispersed across Auckland. There has also been a transition from complex households being the focus for concern to the risk posed by growth among various forms of residential housing, healthcare facilities, and some educational centres. Private gatherings continue to be a major driver of transmission.
- 7 The effective reproduction number ( $R_{\text{eff}}$ ) remains between 1.2 and 1.3. However, the return of Year 11 to 13 students to school on Tuesday 26 October may yet have an effect on transmission, which will be evident within the next week. The public health risk assessment notes that any further

loosening of restrictions (on top of Year 11 to 13 students returning to school) may have a compounding effect on increasing COVID-19 numbers to a further unmanageable level.

- 8 For the rest of New Zealand (excluding Christchurch and parts of the Waikato), the public health risk assessment is that the risk of community transmission remains low.
- 9 The 28 October public health risk assessment notes that one of two cases identified in Christchurch on Wednesday 27 October had recently been in Auckland, which is considered the likely source of the infection. The other case is a household contact considered to be infected by the initial case. It notes there are currently no concerning exposure events that could lead to super-spreader events and that a move to Alert Level 3 is not proportionate at this stage, pending further information about the test results and movement of close contacts. As at 9am 31 October, two close contacts have returned positive tests.
- 10 A public health risk assessment for the Waikato Alert Level 3 area was undertaken on Tuesday 26 October, following which the area moved to stage one of the reduced Alert Level 3 from 11.59pm Wednesday 27 October.
- 11 The Director-General of Health's interim public health advice from Thursday 28 October notes that:
  - 11.1 for the Auckland region, a move to Stage 2 of Alert Level 3 should not be made at this time, given the available evidence indicates the risk is not decreasing and is most likely slowly increasing, and that the potential impact of returning students is yet to be seen;
  - 11.2 for the rest of New Zealand (excluding Christchurch and parts of the Waikato), the potential for COVID-19 to leak outside the Alert Level 3 boundary means Alert Level 2 restrictions should continue to be reinforced; and
  - 11.3 Christchurch remain at Alert Level 2 for the time being as further case investigation and testing occurs.
- 12 The Director-General will provide an oral update to Cabinet today on the situation and Alert Level recommendations for the country.
- 13 On the basis of the Thursday 28 October public health risk assessment and the Director-General of Health's interim advice, I propose Cabinet agrees to:
  - 13.1 keep Auckland at the current Alert Level 3 (the first stage of the three-stage reduction) until 11.59pm Tuesday 16 November; and
  - 13.2 keep the rest of New Zealand outside the Alert Level 3 areas at Alert Level 2 until 11.59pm Tuesday 16 November.
- 14 I also propose Cabinet decide whether to keep parts of the Waikato at the current Alert Level 3 (the first stage of the three-stage reduction), informed by

an updated public health risk assessment to be undertaken on Sunday 31 October and an oral update today from the Director-General.

- 15 I propose Cabinet next review these settings on Monday 15 November. For Auckland and the Waikato, earlier consideration of a move to stage two of the three-stage Alert Level 3 reduction may be possible. I propose that, if sufficient evidence supporting consideration of an earlier move becomes available, Ministers with Power to Act review and take decisions, informed by public health advice, in the week of 8 November on whether Auckland and/or the Waikato should move to stage two.
- 16 More information about requiring workers crossing the Alert Level boundary to be vaccinated is also provided. There are significant operational challenges associated with this vaccination requirement, which will take time to resolve. I note Cabinet decisions to introduce this requirement could be taken on Monday 15 November when we will consider how to enable a pathway for vaccinated people across the Auckland boundary under the COVID-19 Protection Framework.
- 17 Cabinet previously agreed to Out of School Care and Recreation (OSCAR) programmes reopening in Auckland along with schools and early learning services subject to the same vaccination and testing requirements and public health controls [CAB 21-MIN-0422 refers]. The opening of OSCAR programmes alongside schools may be difficult to align initially. Officials will continue to work on appropriate timing and health controls to reopen OSCAR programmes.
- 18 With regards to further on-site learning for all school students in Alert Level 3 areas, the Minister of Education will report back to Cabinet on Monday 8 November on plans to increase face-to-face learning.

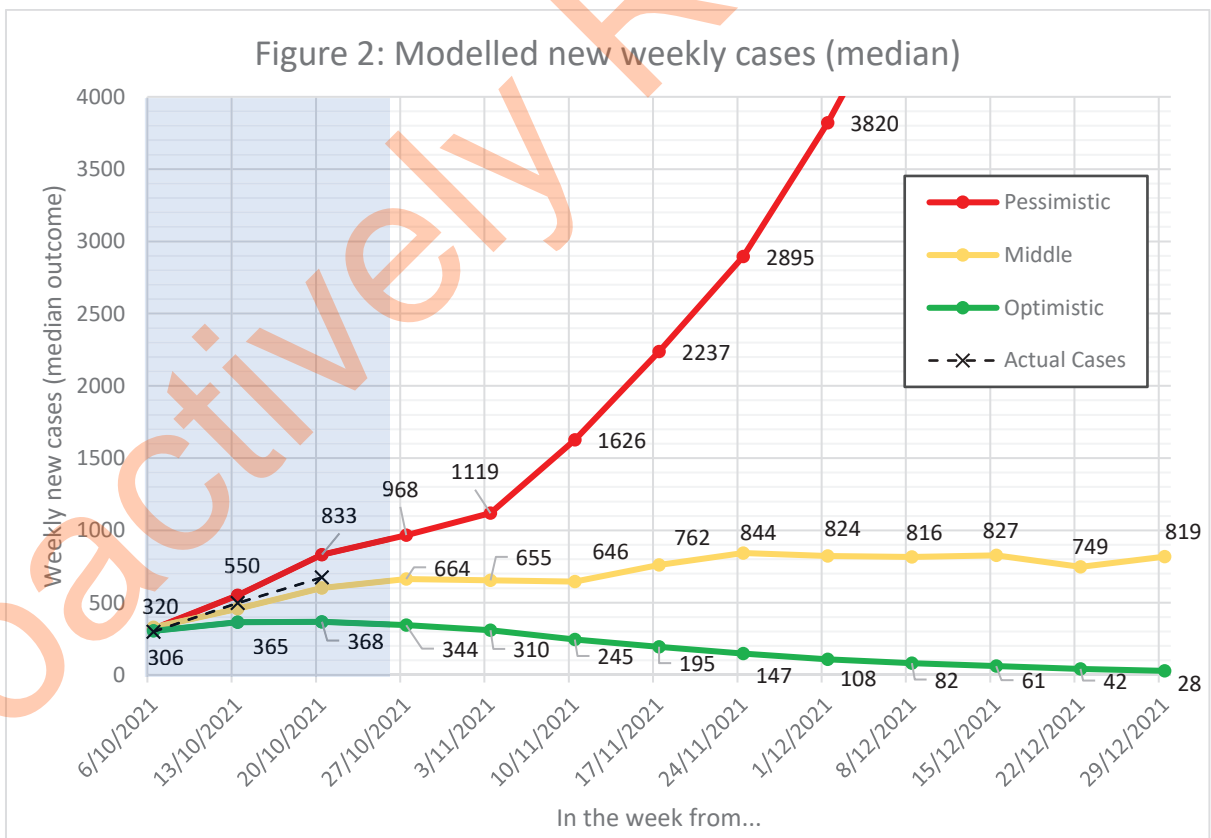
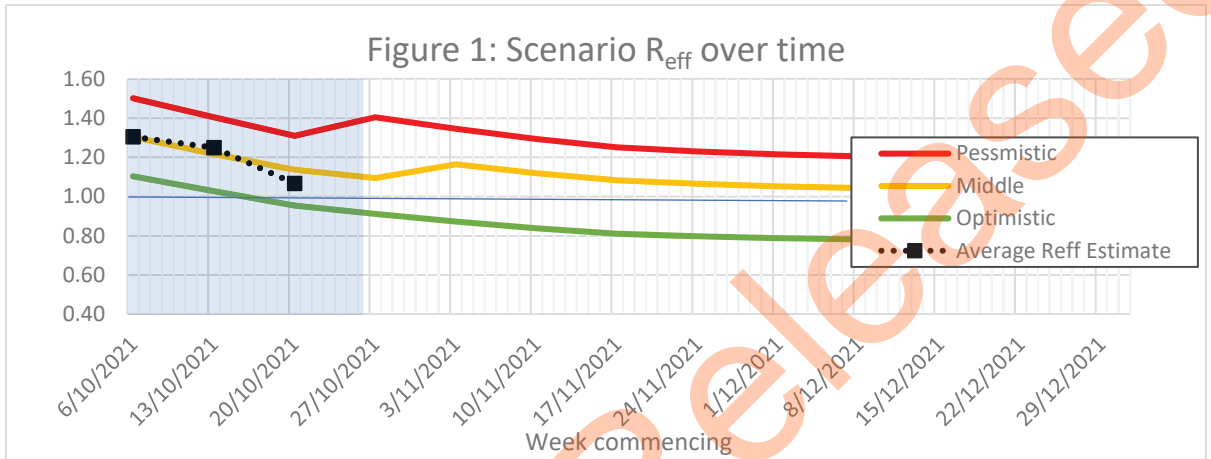
### **Updated modelling in relation to the current outbreak**

#### *Simulating case trajectories*

- 19 When Cabinet previously considered the Alert Level settings for Auckland on 18 October, several draft scenario projections were presented.
- 20 These projections were based on a path for the  $R_{\text{eff}}$  which reduces over time as a result of expected increasing vaccination coverage in Auckland. It also assumes reduced case management and contact tracing effectiveness above 1000 active cases.
- 21 Three of these projections are presented again here relating to the “optimistic”, “middle” and “pessimistic” scenarios for transmission. Figure 1 shows the  $R_{\text{eff}}$  over time for these scenarios, and Figure 2 shows the projected case numbers which result.
- 22 In reality,  $R_{\text{eff}}$  will not behave in the manner depicted in Figure 1. There are several factors which will drive  $R_{\text{eff}}$ , each of which comes with a lag before

influencing daily case numbers, such as: Alert Level changes; changing levels of compliance; or different demographics for new cases.

- 23 We are now in Week 4 of these projections. Over the previous three weeks, the actual reported case numbers (674 cases in the week starting 20 October) and recent estimates for  $R_{eff}$  suggest that we are not in the “optimistic” scenario, and are instead currently tracking between this and the “middle” scenarios.



- 24 Recent estimates for  $R_{eff}$  have been volatile. Estimates typically rely on reported case information and will be responsive to sharp changes (increases or plateaus) in the trend for daily case numbers. The average  $R_{eff}$  for the period since the previous Alert Level review decision has most likely been

around 1.2. The average  $R_{\text{eff}}$  estimate for the week commencing 20 October is still liable to change.

- 25 Officials will continue to receive weekly updated projections from Te Pūnaha Matatini modellers, conditioned on recent reported case numbers. These will project future case numbers based on high, medium and low transmission scenarios and the outputs will be included in future Alert Level Review Cabinet papers.

#### *Reopening schools*

- 26 Te Pūnaha Matatini's network contagion model team has simulated the potential impacts of reopening schools. The results indicate that reopening schools is likely to create broader transmission by increasing the connectedness of the community: households become linked when they otherwise would not, increasing the potential chains of transmission, and the overall number of infections, outside of school environments. The expected increase in transmission is greater if schools are reopened to all pupils.

#### *Transmission outside Auckland*

- 27 The projections above are based on increasing rates of vaccination in Auckland. They are not generalisable nor should they be applied proportionately across New Zealand, given the stage of the outbreak and the boundary between Auckland and the rest of the country.
- 28 We can expect exposure events outside of Auckland will increase in proportion with any rise in case numbers within Auckland. Previous modelling results demonstrate that it would then take some time for significant transmission to occur in other regions, with time to scale up the local response. For example, if cases were only detected through generic community surveillance, and around 20 to 40 percent of symptomatic people were getting tested, outbreaks would be expected to be detected around 10 days after the seeding event, with around 40 infections total at the time of first detection. Similar to a new outbreak at the national level, modelling results suggest that there is a greater chance of elimination of an outbreak at the local level if:
- 28.1 new cases are detected early, through intensive testing efforts in the symptomatic population and those who cross the Alert Level boundary; and
  - 28.2 there is an immediate response to any emergence of new cases which are suggestive of wider spread (such as no clear link to the Auckland population).

## Director-General of Health's assessment against the health factors as at 28 October

### Auckland

#### *Trends in the daily number of cases*

- 29 As at 9:30am Thursday 28 October, there have been 2,793 cases in the Auckland region and 1,284 of these cases remain active. The overall number of new daily cases reported in the Auckland region has increased throughout October, though not exponentially. The seven-day rolling average for Auckland as at Thursday 28 October is 89 cases. This is an increase from a seven-day rolling average of 38 cases reported for the previous risk assessment, undertaken on 13 October. Case numbers continue to track as expected and continue to grow, within a  $R_{\text{eff}}$  of between 1.2 and 1.3.
- 30 There has continued to be a shift from complex households to the risk posed by growth among various forms of residential housing, healthcare facilities and some educational centres. Private gatherings continue to be a major driver of transmission in Auckland. Several cases have been identified in high-risk settings including residential housing and health care settings.

#### *Contact tracing and compliance*

- 31 As at 9am Thursday 28 October, there are 2,036 open contacts and 36,352 contacts with a quarantine address in Auckland. 2,027 (99 percent) of open contacts and 34,241 (94 percent) of all contacts have received an outbound call from contact tracers to confirm testing and isolation requirements.
- 32 As at 28 October, there is good testing of contacts, with no overdue testing. The system is stable and coping with volume. It has been noted that there are ongoing issues of cases being uncontactable, which are being rectified with the use of "finders" services.

#### *Auckland community testing rates remain strong*

- 33 Testing rates remain high in Auckland with a seven-day rolling average of around 14,000. On Wednesday 27 October, 15,468 tests were processed (excluding managed isolation facility guests and workers). In the past seven days almost 100,000 tests have been processed.
- 34 There has been increased levels of essential worker testing, with 43,508 tested in the seven days up to and including Wednesday 27 October.

#### *Wastewater detections continue across many parts of Auckland*

- 35 COVID-19 detections in wastewater sample testing continue across many parts of Auckland; these detections are expected due to the number of cases.



*Vaccination rates across Auckland are above the national average*

- 36 Vaccination rates have increased since the public health risk assessment on Thursday 14 October. As at Wednesday 27 October, 90 percent of the eligible population in Auckland have had one dose (up 3 percent), and 78 percent have had their second dose (up 13 percent). It is estimated that Auckland metro DHBs will reach 90 percent double dose by late November or early December.
- 37 Despite that, inequities in vaccination coverage remain by age group and ethnicity. This includes Māori and Pacific peoples still having relatively low vaccination rates for the 12 to 19 and 20 to 34 age groups, and for those who have received a second dose.
- 38 Details of vaccine uptake by key ethnicities within Auckland Metro DHBs as at 11:59pm Wednesday 27 October are included at Appendix 1.

*Health system capacity in Auckland is adequate*

- 39 There are 37 hospitalisations as at Thursday 28 October. Of these, 31 are active cases and six are recovered cases. Twelve are in Middlemore (two are in ICU/HDU), 15 in Auckland City Hospital (two in ICU/HDU), seven in North Shore Hospital (one is in ICU/HDU), one in Waitakere Hospital, two in Starship.
- 40 Health system and hospital capacity in Auckland is adequate. Hospitalisations are tracking according to NHRCC forecasts, with peak numbers still expected in mid-to-late November.
- 41 NHRCC are encouraged by the lower ICU conversion rate for hospitalised cases and if this rate continues the risks related to ICU capacity will be minimised. This low conversion rate is likely in part to the younger age profile of cases in this outbreak, with the average age of cases and hospitalisations both at around 30-years-old.
- 42 An increasing number of cases are being managed at home (approximately 310 cases) rather than in MIQ. As a result, capacity in MIQ is adequate. In addition, there is capacity to manage about 700 households using primary care providers, which the Director-General has advised should be manageable at the levels NHRCC are forecasting.
- 43 The individuals who are isolating at home are being managed according to their clinical risk, which includes testing requirements for people who have not been diagnosed with COVID-19. Self-isolating individuals (and their families) will also have access to Ministry of Social Development (MSD) welfare support and health clinical support.

**Christchurch**

- 44 The Ministry of Health was notified late on Wednesday 27 October of two COVID-19 cases in Christchurch from the same household. Both are

unvaccinated. The available information as at Thursday 28 October indicates that their exposures are in mainly lower risk settings such as supermarkets, shops, buses, takeaway shops, and some household visits. At the time of the 28 October public health risk assessment, test results from close contacts were pending. As at 9am 31 October, two close contacts had returned positive results.

- 45 Compared to Auckland Metro DHBs, testing rates across Canterbury have been low.
- 46 The virus was not detected in the Christchurch wastewater sample taken on Tuesday 26 October. A result from a sample collected from Christchurch on Wednesday 27 October was expected by Friday 29 October. There have been recent cases identified in the Christchurch MIQ so a detection in the wastewater may be a result of infection in returnees rather than in the community. The catchment also serves a population of approximately 300,000 so wastewater testing may not detect a small number of cases.
- 47 Christchurch Community and Public Health have advised that there is good capacity for surge testing if required and that there is MIQ capacity for approximately 40 cases.
- 48 Rates of vaccination in Canterbury sit close to the national average, with 89 percent of people having received their first dose and 69 percent receiving their second. Vaccination rates still lag for Māori, which currently sit at 74 percent and 51 percent respectively for first and second doses.
- 49 Around the suburbs where the two cases reside, rates of vaccination sit close to around the average for Canterbury, with most of the surrounding local areas achieving first dose rates of more than 90 percent.

**Rest of New Zealand (excluding Auckland, the Waikato and Christchurch)**

- 50 On Friday 22 October, a case linked to the Te Awamutu sub-cluster was detected in Blenheim. The case spent the previous night in Tokoroa (an Alert Level 2 area) but testing of contacts has not yet detected further cases. Over the weekend of 23-24 October five cases were reported in Northland that were all linked. Together with the Christchurch cases, these cases show there remains a heightened risk of cases being seeded to other parts of New Zealand from Auckland and Waikato.
- 51 Community testing rates continue to be the lowest in areas outside of Auckland, Northland, and Waikato, particularly in the South Island. There have been no unexpected wastewater detections outside of the Waikato, Auckland, and Palmerston North areas.
- 52 Vaccination uptake in the rest of New Zealand continues to increase but at a lower rate than previous weeks.



## Waikato

- 53 A public health risk assessment for the Waikato Alert Level 3 area was undertaken on Tuesday 26 October. It noted that, while the risk of undetected community transmission was not increasing, the situation in the area was not fully contained and remained a concern. Informed by this assessment and Ministry of Health advice, Ministers with Power to Act agreed to the Waikato Alert Level 3 area moving to stage one of the reduced Alert Level 3 from 11.59pm Wednesday 27 October. An updated public health risk assessment will be completed on Sunday 31 October.

## Director-General of Health's conclusions as at 28 October (excluding Waikato)

- 54 Given that the available evidence indicates that the risk is not decreasing and is most likely slowly increasing, there is not yet a basis to ease restrictions in Auckland.
- 55 Cases numbers in Auckland are tracking as expected, with a  $R_{\text{eff}}$  of between 1.2 and 1.3 with an upwards trajectory. We have also yet to see the full impact of the recent reopening of schools for Year 11 to 13 students on Tuesday 26 October and whether it will result in increased transmission. Easing restrictions further at this time could add too many extra variables into current outbreak. In the meantime, there continues to be a focus on getting vaccination rates up across Auckland.
- 56 While the Director-General has considered a step down to stage 2 of Alert Level 3, he has concluded it is too early. The current restrictions are helping to keep case numbers lower than they might otherwise be. A comparison of this outbreak with that in Victoria has shown the impact of restrictions and vaccinations, despite Auckland's outbreak initially accelerating much faster than in Victoria.
- 57 A public health risk assessment for Christchurch was conducted following the assessment for Auckland and the rest of New Zealand. Due to the early stage of case investigation, with test results from the identified close contacts yet to come, the Director-General recommends that the existing Alert Level 2 settings should remain in place. However, the situation in Christchurch and the public health settings will need to be reviewed following the results of the close contacts.
- 58 Previous circumstances where we recommended an escalation to Alert Level 3 (e.g. Northland) was when the initial case was not being cooperative with contact tracers, which provided very little information to inform decision making. In this situation, the initial information from the two cases has quickly identified the contacts which are at most risk, who are being tested.
- 59 There is a continued risk that COVID-19 may be seeded outside of the Alert Level 3 boundary, particularly with increasing case numbers in the Auckland region. As such, it is recommended that Alert Level 2 restrictions are continued and be reinforced while the risk in Auckland and other Level 3 areas remains high.

- 60 The Director-General noted that consideration should be given to the settings for outdoor gatherings and events to allow no limits on gathering size. This recognises that outdoor gatherings and events are very low risk and would not appreciably increase the risk of transmission. This advice is also consistent with the initial public health advice for Alert Level 2 settings.
- 61 Based on the public health risk assessment completed on Thursday 28 October, the Director-General's interim health assessment is:
- 61.1 the risk of undetected community transmission in Auckland remains high; and
  - 61.2 the risk of undetected community transmission for the rest of New Zealand (excluding parts of Waikato currently at Alert Level 3 Step 1 and Christchurch) is low.

*Director-General of Health's recommendations*

- 62 The Director-General's interim public health advice is that:
- 62.1 Auckland remain at Alert Level 3 Step 1 until at least 11.59pm Monday 15 November.
  - 62.2 Christchurch remain at Alert Level 2 for the time being as further case investigation and testing occurs and is actively monitored. Obtaining the results for identified close contacts is critical for determining if a higher Alert Level is required.
  - 62.3 The rest of New Zealand (excluding parts of the Waikato currently at Alert Level 3 Step 1 and Christchurch) remain at Alert Level 2 until at least 11.59pm Monday 15 November.
  - 62.4 An updated public health risk assessment be undertaken to review these settings on Thursday 11 November.
- 63 At the same time, the following needs to continue:
- 63.1 increasing vaccination rates, with a particular focus on rural and vulnerable communities;
  - 63.2 encouraging the public to continue to be tested if they are a contact of a case and/or have any COVID-19 symptoms; and
  - 63.3 increasing communications to reinforce and improve compliance to Alert Level 2 restrictions.
- 64 The Director-General also recommends that consideration is given to easing restrictions on outdoor gatherings and events at Alert Level 2 to allow no limits on gathering size noting that outdoor gatherings and events are very low risk and would not appreciably increase the risk of transmission.

## Proposal regarding Alert Levels

- 65 On the basis of the public health risk assessment on 28 October and the Director-General's interim public health advice, I propose Cabinet agrees to:
- 65.1 keep Auckland at the current Alert Level 3 (the first stage of the three-stage reduction) until 11.59pm Tuesday 16 November; and
- 65.2 keep the rest of New Zealand outside the Alert Level 3 areas at Alert Level 2 until 11.59pm Tuesday 16 November.
- 66 I also propose Cabinet take decisions on whether to keep the Waikato at the current Alert Level 3 (the first stage of the three-stage reduction), informed by an updated public health risk assessment to be undertaken on Sunday 31 October and an oral update today from the Director-General.
- 67 I note that, since the completion of the 28 October public health risk assessment, there has been an increase in daily case numbers in Auckland. This is putting pressure on contact tracing capacity, which may be reached in the coming days if numbers continue at this level in Auckland or increase. There were 135 new community cases in Auckland in the 24 hours to 9am Sunday 31 October, with 6 new cases in the Waikato and 2 in Northland.
- 68 The Director-General's oral update will also include the latest situation and appropriate Alert Level across all New Zealand today.
- 69 I propose Cabinet next review Alert Level settings on Monday 15 November. For Auckland and the Waikato, earlier consideration of a move to stage two of the three-stage Alert Level 3 reduction may be possible. I propose that, if sufficient evidence supporting an earlier move becomes available, Ministers with Power to Act review and take decisions, informed by public health advice in the week of 8 November on whether Auckland and/or the Waikato should move to stage two.
- 70 With regards the Director-General's recommendation that consideration is given to easing restrictions on outdoor gatherings at Alert Level 2, in light of the risk of community transmission both within and out of the Auckland and Waikato Alert Level 3 areas, I do not think it appropriate to increase caps. However, I will consider this following future public health risk assessments and whether we can step down to stage two of Alert Level 3.

## Assessment of the proposed measures/options against the non-health factors

- 71 I have assessed the options against the non-health factors agreed by Cabinet, as set out below. On balance, the assessment supports the proposals in this paper.

### *Economic impacts from Alert Levels*

- 72 The latest estimates on the economic impacts of the Alert Level restrictions are set out in the table below.

**Approximate economic impacts of the Alert Level restrictions relative to Alert Level 1 (rounded to nearest \$10m)<sup>1</sup>**

Restrictions	Reduction in economic activity per week	
AL2 across all of NZ	\$70 million	1% of national GDP
AL3 in Auckland, AL2 rest of country	\$250 million	4% of national GDP
AL3 in Auckland and Waikato <sup>2</sup> , AL2 rest of country	\$290 million	5% of national GDP
AL4 across all of NZ	\$1,520 million	25% of national GDP

- 73 High-frequency economic indicators point to a continued reduction in Auckland's activity, while also showing a slight recovery in activity in the Waikato:
- 73.1 In the week ended Sunday 24 October, card spending in Auckland was steady at around 69 percent of 2019 levels while spending in Waikato increased to a level around 14 percent below 2019 levels. Spending in Alert Level 2 regions continued to track above 2019 levels, with the exception of tourism-dependent areas like Rotorua and Queenstown.
- 73.2 In the week ended Sunday 24 October, heavy traffic in Auckland increased to a level around three percent lower than that seen in the week prior to the August 2021 outbreak, while heavy traffic in Hamilton recovered to around eight percent higher than before the outbreak. Heavy traffic has made a full recovery in other urban centres.
- 74 Further information on the overall economic impact of the lockdown, including supply chain issues, will be provided to Cabinet when Alert Levels are next reviewed on Monday 15 November.

Updated information about uptake of grants and benefits

- 75 The Wage Subsidy Scheme August 2021 has had strong uptake with \$3,565 million paid over five payments as at Tuesday 26 October, though uptake has fallen with each subsequent fortnightly payment. Overall, the payments have supported 1,278,231 jobs, of which the vast majority are for businesses with under 500 employees.
- 76 The number of people on a main benefit increased after lockdown, peaking at 10,401 higher in the week of Friday 17 September. However, it has fallen since, with 6,066 more people now on a main benefit than before lockdown.

<sup>1</sup> Some of these GDP losses will occur even without Alert Level restrictions, as people adjust their behaviour in response to perceived risk.

<sup>2</sup> This estimate is based on a scenario where the entire Waikato region is at a standard Alert Level 3. The data currently available does not allow for estimates of sub-regional impacts, or for estimates of the impacts of intermediate steps to ease Auckland's Alert level 3 restrictions.

- 77 Food grants increased significantly in the first two weeks after lockdown but then started trending lower. Since the week ending 24 September, food grants have remained at a similar level to before the national lockdown. The Auckland region peaked in early September with 38 percent of all food grants, but is now receiving 30 percent (similar to the week before lockdown). The Waikato region has not seen any major increase in food grants since the introduction of Alert Level 3.
- 78 The Ministry of Social Development (MSD) has been providing support through the New Zealand Food Network as well as funding and support to providers to meet demand for food and essential items. Providers have noted that demand for food support in the region has increased, with some noting this is at least double the normal demand for the time of year.
- 79 The August 2021 Resurgence Support Payment Scheme has also had strong uptake with \$1.178 billion paid across the three payments as of Friday 22 October (the third payment opened on Friday 8 October). Most support (around 93 percent of recipients as of 22 October) has been for businesses with fewer than 10 FTEs.

*Impacts on at-risk populations*

- 80 The issues raised in previous Alert Level reviews continue to persist. These include, but are not limited to, ongoing restrictions on earning capacity; business uncertainty and shifts in business models; inequitable access to material essentials; issues related to education and learning; and strong and ongoing demand for mental health support services.
- 81 Updates from the last report include:
- 81.1 Evidence of Māori businesses and services adapting to the changed circumstances, but Alert-Level-related impacts are intensifying, including weakened (and weakening) resiliency and constrained ability to plan. Businesses are also grappling with how to help their employees get vaccinated. Communications about the scope and implementation of vaccine mandates will assist.
  - 81.2 Access to digital education resources and tools continues to be a concern for Māori, particularly as primary school closures continue.
  - 81.3 In terms of health impacts from COVID-19, Māori have made up 26 percent of cases requiring hospitalisation during the current outbreak and 48 percent of new cases in the week 21 to 27 October.
  - 81.4 Vaccination rates of Pacific people are increasing and the Ministry for Pacific Peoples (MPP) continues to deliver targeted information campaigns to Pacific communities nationally.
  - 81.5 There continues to be concern from ethnic communities around the impact of prolonged restrictions on mental health, wellbeing and isolation (especially for older people), particularly as new cases



emerge outside Auckland. There is a focus on supporting ethnic communities to get vaccinated.

- 81.6 Disabled people will likely be relieved by the new mandatory vaccination requirements, but may also be concerned about the potential impact of this requirement on supports if carers choose not to be vaccinated or if service providers choose not to provide carer support to disabled people who are not vaccinated.
- 81.7 Older people are continuing to experience increased levels of loneliness and social isolation. While some relaxation of restrictions is welcomed, with cases in the community, many older people are anxious about going out to get food, keep medical appointments or meet up with family/whānau. They are also starting to get concerned about whether they will be able to see family, whānau and friends over Christmas and the summer holiday period and their ability to plan.
- 81.8 There was a ten percent increase in the number of contacts with Youthline Helpline last week compared to the previous week, from 388 to 428. However, the number of incidents has decreased by 20 percent, from 94 to 75, of which 21 incidents required external intervention. The top two presenting issues remained the same for the past two weeks: suicide, and depression and sadness.

#### *Public attitudes and compliance*

- 82 A pulse check survey by TRA over the past week indicated a decline in sentiment. The proportion of respondents who said they feel “the country is heading in the right direction” is down to 41 percent (from 70 percent in September). The number of people who are concerned with “not knowing when we will return to normal” is now 60 percent (up from 41 percent in September). The dominant emotion about the change in approach to managing COVID-19 is neutral (44 percent) followed by anger (24 percent) and sad (22 percent).
- 83 Between 11.59pm Tuesday 21 September and 5pm Wednesday 27 October, New Zealand Police have undertaken 18,638 pandemic-related events in Auckland, Northland and parts of the Waikato (up from 12,083 last week). A total of 6036 online 105 breach notifications were received from members of the public over the same period (up from 3,691 last week, with the 6063 notifications made up of 5,235 in Alert Level 3 areas and 800 in Alert Level 2 areas).
- 84 Since Wednesday 22 September, 1,025 pandemic-related infringement notices have been issued by Police (up from 698 last week), with non-compliance principally relating to stay-at-home orders and failure to maintain physical distancing requirements. Over the same period, 43 people have been prosecuted and 33 people have received warnings.
- 85 Generally, compliance at the boundary remains high and motorists are carrying the required evidence to demonstrate their permitted reason to

travel. Overall, only around one percent of vehicles have been turned around. Compliance is lower for heavy motor vehicles with 2.4 percent of the 59,646 heavy vehicles stopped at the boundary over the period 7 September to 28 October being turned around.

#### *Ability to operationalise Alert Level restrictions*

- 86 I am not proposing any changes to Alert Level settings in this paper. Operational impacts relating to decisions about crossing Alert Level boundaries are set out below.
- 87 Operational pressures on Police continue as Alert Level restrictions endure, especially given the resource required in MIQ and at checkpoints. With increasing numbers of positive COVID-19 cases, Police is playing a greater role in investigation of breaches and locating uncooperative individuals. This is requiring a trade-off in investigative capability.

#### *Update on health system preparedness*

- 88 The New Zealand health sector is equipped to respond to COVID-19 in the community. DHBs have spent the past 18 months preparing to manage COVID-19 surges within hospitals and the primary and the community care sector has also adapted to dealing with COVID-19.
- 89 A key focus now is the finalisation of a community model of care for managing most COVID-19 cases safely in the community. This work is being expedited across Auckland, and a national approach will be finalised ready for implementation nationwide from early November as part of a wider National Health Resilience Programme.
- 90 Health sector workforce capability and capacity remains a significant challenge. There are known pre-existing skills gaps and workforce shortages. The Ministry is working with the sector to develop an immediate roadmap and implementation plan to address workforce shortages, including through enabling immigration of key workers.
- 91 Most COVID-19 positive cases will not need hospital-level care and will be safely cared for at home or in a community facility, but this will vary depending on vaccination status, ethnicity and socio-economic issues such as housing. The Ministry of Health is working with the Ministry of Social Development and across existing community groups to develop welfare and wrap-around service support for COVID-19 care in the community.

### **Alert Level Boundaries**

#### *Update on current boundaries*

- 92 Alert Level boundaries are currently in place to minimise movement into, out of, or through the Auckland and Waikato Alert Level 3 areas.

- 93 Section 9(2)(b)(ii)
- 94 As at 8am Friday 29 October, there had been 22,963 requests for personal exemptions, with 22,344 decisions made and 4,852 approved. The majority of approvals continue to relate to funerals, tangihanga, visiting a dying person, or need for mental health support.
- 95 As at 8am Friday 29 October, there had been a total of 5,129 requests for business exemptions. Of these, 523 were approved, 3,399 were declined and 1207 are pending.
- 96 A total of 14,600 businesses had been issued Business Travel Documents as at 28 October, enabling 87,300 workers to cross Alert Level boundaries. Transport (4,300 businesses, 32,300 workers) and primary industries (3,000 businesses, 15,100 workers) account for just over half of this permitted business travel.

*Vaccination requirements for people transiting Alert Level boundaries*

- 97 On Monday 18 October, Cabinet agreed in principle, subject to further work on operational implications and consultation with affected industries, that people crossing the Alert Level boundary for work purposes be required to be vaccinated [CAB-21-MIN-0422 refers]. Officials advise there are significant operational challenges that require time to resolve before any requirement comes into effect. For this reason I consider that Cabinet decisions could be taken on any requirement on Monday 15 November when we will consider how to enable a pathway for vaccinated people across the Auckland boundary under the COVID-19 Protection Framework.
- 98 Requiring those crossing the Alert Level boundary for work purposes to be vaccinated aligns with the intent of the COVID-19 Protection Framework, a key premise of which is to enable more activity to occur where people are vaccinated. By helping to mitigate the risk of the virus being transmitted outside of an Alert Level boundary, the requirement would also support our overall public health response to COVID-19, to prevent and limit the outbreak or spread of the virus.
- 99 Officials advise this vaccination requirement should be coupled with testing requirements that already apply to people travelling across an Alert Level boundary for work.<sup>3</sup> These testing requirements are well-known to impacted parties and provide an additional layer of protection to assist in mitigating the risk associated with travel across a boundary. Changing the testing requirements for workers who also must be vaccinated to cross the boundary would add unnecessary complexity and risk causing confusion about what is

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<sup>3</sup> Clause 19A of the COVID-19 Public Health Response (Alert Level Requirements) Order (No 12) 2021 outlines COVID-19 testing obligations of certain people travelling into and out of Alert Level 3 areas for work activities.

required to cross. Public health advice supports requiring workers crossing the boundary to carry evidence of both vaccination status and having had a COVID-19 test in the past seven days.

- 100 For this requirement, the same definitions of COVID-19 vaccine and vaccination used in the COVID-19 Public Health Response (Vaccinations) Order 2021 would apply.


Compliance and enforcement

- 101 A dual legal obligation could be employed for the mandatory vaccination requirement:

101.1 For the individual, that they must carry evidence of their vaccination status when crossing an Alert Level boundary for work purposes and disclose their vaccination status to their employer. Disclosure of vaccination status is necessary to support PCBUs with workforce planning, based on which employers are vaccinated and who are therefore able to cross the boundary.

101.2 For the PCBU, obligations would be similar to those currently in place for testing requirements. Specifically, to support workers to get vaccinated and not to allow any unvaccinated workers to cross the boundary for work purposes.

- 102 The number of people who are unable to get vaccinated for medical reasons in New Zealand is currently low (estimated to be fewer than 200 people nationally). For this reason, those who cannot receive the vaccination for medical reasons could be exempt from this new vaccination requirement. Public health advice supports this exemption. The Director-General of Health would continue to have the power to grant exemptions from the requirement for other reasons.<sup>4</sup>

- 103 Section 9(2)(f)(iv)
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- 104 COVID-19 Vaccination Certificates (CVCs) could be used to verify compliance with the requirement at Alert Level boundaries. Officials are working to introduce CVCs widely by the beginning of December, meaning introduction and compliance monitoring of the requirement to carry a CVC could not commence until then, if it is agreed that CVCs are used. The alternative would be a paper-based record of vaccination, which would have operational, verification and privacy implications.

- 105 While 100 percent compliance monitoring would be preferable given the risk of transmission across boundaries, this level of manual checking would have

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<sup>4</sup> Clause 54 of the COVID-19 Public Health Response (Alert Level Requirements) Order (No 12) 2021.

significant operational and resource implications. Traffic flows across the boundary would be adversely impacted by intensive manual checking. Police currently carry out spot checks of freight vehicles crossing Alert Level boundaries, and 100 percent checking of other vehicles. Officials have advised that 100 percent checking of all vehicles, including freight, for vaccination requirements is not possible, and a spot checking approach would be adopted. WorkSafe would monitor PCBU compliance.

- 106 Breaching these obligations would be an offence under section 26 of the COVID-19 Public Health Response Act 2020 (the Act). Penalties for the proposed offences could be aligned with the current penalties in the Act (and those in the COVID-19 Public Health Response Amendment Bill (No 2) 2021 when it is enacted). With regards to the type of fine issued in the event of non-compliance, both infringement and court-imposed fines could apply.
- 107 For any workers who do not or cannot get vaccinated (or who refuse to confirm their vaccination status), standard employment law provisions would apply. In other words, redeployment of employees to work that does not require travel across an Alert Level boundary in the first instance, followed by termination as a last resort.

#### Operational and implementation considerations

- 108 Introducing a mandatory vaccination requirement for workers crossing the boundary presents significant operational and economic challenges. Officials advise that in the time available, limited engagement has been undertaken and it has not been possible to engage with and receive feedback from all potentially affected sectors. I am advised that the following key concerns and considerations were expressed:
- 108.1 Accurately quantifying the number of people likely to be impacted by this proposal will be difficult. This is because several affected sectors are not currently subject to a mandatory vaccination requirement. This means there is currently no legal basis to require employees to share their vaccination status with their employer.
- 108.2 If there are high numbers of unvaccinated workers in key industries when the new requirement comes into effect, supply chain issues and disruption to domestic air travel schedules, for example, may emerge.
- 108.3 A number of those consulted suggested a lead in time of at least four to six weeks between announcement and the requirement coming into effect. Those consulted considered this lead in time to be necessary to allow impacted workers to receive both doses of the vaccination, and for PCBUs to establish employee vaccination status. A reasonable lead in time will also help to mitigate some of the potential supply chain concerns noted above.
- 108.4 There is concern that the mandatory requirement would come into effect around the Christmas and New Year holiday period, which may heighten supply chain issues.



- 108.5 Compliance monitoring of the requirement may create congestion and delays at Alert Level boundary checkpoints (road and air), due to additional checks being required at these checkpoints.
- 108.6 Questions likely to be raised about why mandatory vaccination is not proposed to be expanded to all people crossing the boundary, not just workers.
- 109 A prominent theme of the feedback received from affected sectors is timing – when the requirement will be introduced and whether there will be sufficient time to meet new obligations introduced with it. In light of this, the new vaccination requirement could be announced on Monday 15 November if Cabinet decisions are taken on this requirement. The requirement could then be enacted in the COVID-19 Public Health Response (Alert Level Requirements) Order (No 12) 2021, but commencement of the legal requirement to carry evidence of vaccination when crossing the boundary could be delayed until at least 1 December, to align with the implementation of CVCs.
- 110 Between now and the start of December, the following phasing could be adopted to support compliance and monitoring of compliance with the new requirement:
- 110.1 Workers crossing the boundary are strongly encouraged to be vaccinated following the announcement, before the legal requirement comes into effect.
- 110.2 In the week commencing 15 November, the obligation on individual employees to disclose their vaccination status comes into effect. This would support PCBUs in gaining an understanding of the proportion of their workforce that is vaccinated, and to start planning rosters and schedules accordingly.
- 110.3 In the week commencing 29 November, it is anticipated CVCs will be implemented. This would assist PCBUs in confirming employees' vaccination status and forward rosters and schedules. CVCs will also provide the requisite evidence for employees crossing the boundary.
- 111 There are two options for when the legal obligation itself, requiring people crossing an Alert Level boundary to carry evidence of having been vaccinated, could come into effect. The first is in the week commencing 29 November, when CVCs are implemented. An alternative option, which I understand is the transport sector's preference, would be to delay commencement of the obligation until the week commencing 13 December. These additional two weeks would provide a buffer for any delays in implementing the CVCs, and would give PCBUs an opportunity to firm up their rosters and schedules based on who they confirm is vaccinated using a combination of employee disclosures and CVCs.
- 112 Officials considered whether the requirement could be implemented sooner if only one dose of the vaccination was required as a first step, instead of

requiring people to be fully vaccinated. I am advised a phased implementation would not shorten timeframes because the verification, evidential and planning time constraints persist regardless of whether a single or double dose of the vaccine is required.

- 113 Introducing the requirement earlier is not recommended because time is required for workers to get vaccinated, and for PCBUs to undertake workflow planning to minimise supply chain and other impacts, based on which employees are vaccinated and permitted to move across the boundary. Employees would have an obligation to disclose their vaccination status to their employer, but some employees may still refuse to do so. These employees would have to be treated as unvaccinated by their employer for the purposes of workforce planning. Alternatives, including allowing PCBUs to access employees' vaccination records from the Ministry of Health to verify the status disclosed to them by the employee, have been discounted by officials. This is due to resource and privacy considerations.
- 114 As noted above CVCs could be used to verify vaccination status. This would mean the requirement could not come into effect until 1 December at the earliest. If we wanted to bring the requirement into force earlier an alternative form of evidence to verify vaccination status and exemption from the requirement on medical grounds would be needed. Other forms of evidence could include hard copy vaccination cards or a letter from a General Practitioner or the Ministry of Health detailing vaccination status. Multiple evidence options could impact enforcement officers' ability to accurately verify whether or not a person meets the vaccination requirements.
- 115 Requiring all people crossing the boundary for work purposes from December would provide a useful illustration of the impacts of vaccination and testing requirements on things like traffic flows and supply chains. Having this information could inform work to expand mandatory vaccination of all people crossing Alert Level boundaries. This work is being progressed as part of the COVID-19 Protection Framework.

*Additional permissions for building and construction*

- 116 On 18 October, Cabinet noted that I would bring a proposal to Cabinet on Monday 1 November 2021 on whether to allow workers involved in building and construction of infrastructure that contributes to government priority projects to cross boundaries [CAB-21-MIN-0422 refers]. Given the risk of community transmission in Auckland remains high, I do not consider these changes prudent at this time.
- 117 I understand that the Construction Sector Accord have signalled a level of urgency sits around supporting fully vaccinated workers to be able to travel across the Auckland boundary, to address financial pressures for workers and firms. They are connected into the advice being developed on how fully vaccinated workers will be able to cross the Auckland boundaries under the COVID-19 Protection and are interested in helping to trial implementation approaches.

## Education

### *Further reopening of schools*

- 118 On 26 October 2021 Cabinet noted the Minister of Education was considering proposals to increase face-to-face onsite education in Alert Level 3 areas and authorised the Minister of Education and Associate Minister of Education (Hon Jan Tinetti) to have Power to Act to take decisions on the proposals [CAB-21-MIN-0440 refers].
- 119 The Ministry of Education has undertaken consultation with primary school representatives and there is support for managing student numbers on-site through an approach based on cohorts or groups of students attending on different days. However, there is a wide range of schools with diverse community circumstances, and any return to face-to-face learning will need to allow flexibility to recognise this.
- 120 In my capacity as Minister of Education I have raised the possibility of 15 November as a date for Year 1 to 8 students to return to face-to-face learning. However, current thinking is that a start date of 16 or 17 November would be more likely to allow for schools to address the impact of requiring education workers to have first doses by 15 November.
- 121 Moreover, as the public health risk assessment notes, we have yet to see whether the return to face-to-face learning for Year 11 to 13 students will result in increased transmission. I am advised that an initial public health risk assessment will be available by Thursday 4 November. I consider it prudent to wait for this assessment before making a decision about timing.
- 122 I therefore propose to take this decision back to Cabinet on Monday 8 November.

### *Timing of reopening of Out of School Care and Recreation (OSCAR) programmes in Alert Level 3 areas*

- 123 On 18 October Cabinet agreed to Out of School Care and Recreation (OSCAR) programmes reopening in Auckland alongside the reopening of schools and early learning services to all students, subject to the same vaccination and testing requirements and public health controls that apply to schools and early learning services [CAB 21-MIN-0422 refers]. This decision was based on the ability to enable parents to return to work.
- 124 The opening of OSCAR programmes alongside schools may be difficult to align initially. OSCAR programmes receive children from multiple classrooms and sometimes multiple schools. MSD will continue to work with the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Health on appropriate timing to reopen OSCAR programmes with appropriate health controls.
- 125 The decisions to have vaccination requirements extend to OSCAR programmes as a condition of their opening have been maintained and communicated to OSCAR providers.

## Financial implications

- 126 The high-level cost estimates for a scenario with Auckland at Alert Level 3 and the rest of New Zealand at Alert Level 2 is \$250-500 million<sup>5</sup> for the Wage Subsidy Scheme and approximately \$200 million for the Resurgence Support Payment.
- 127 The below table outlines the actual WSSAUG21 and RSPAUG21 payments made to date, and updates the remaining appropriation balances.

### WSSAUG21 and RSPAUG21 actual payments made and appropriation balances

	WSSAUG21	RSPAUG21
Payments made	\$3,565 million <sup>6,7</sup>	\$1,178 million
Amount remaining in appropriations	\$557 million	\$1,672 million <sup>8</sup>

### Wage Subsidy Scheme August 2021

- 128 Applications for the fifth payment for the WSSAUG 21 close on Thursday 28 October [CAB-21-MIN-0392 refers]. The Alert level decision to keep Auckland at Alert Level 3 until at least Monday 1 November has triggered the sixth payment for the WSSAUG21 [CAB-21-MIN-0422 refers]. The sixth payment will open at 9am Friday 29 October. The cost of the fifth payment is lower than the previous payments and the cost of the sixth payment is likely to be similar to the fifth payment.
- 129 As at Wednesday 27 October, the balance of the COVID-19 Response and Recovery Fund was Section 9(2)(f)(iv)

### Resurgence Support Payment August 2021

- 130 A third round of RSP was opened on 8 October. This is expected to cost approximately \$200 million. A fourth instalment opens on Friday 29 October. On Thursday 21 October, the COVID-19 Ministerial Group agreed that further RSP payments would be issued on 12 November, 26 November and 10 December (should the Alert Level conditions be met) with the rate being increased to double that of RSP payments to date (\$3,000 + \$800 per FTE). The 29 October payment will be made under the current settings.

<sup>5</sup> This cost estimate has been revised downwards based on actual costing data for payments to date.

<sup>6</sup> Note the \$3,565 million represents actual payments made. It does not represent the value of actual applications made due to the lag in processing time.

<sup>7</sup> This total includes amounts for the first five payments from the WSSAUG21.

<sup>8</sup> On 18 October 2021, Cabinet authorised the COVID-19 Ministerial Group (CMG) to have Power to Act to take decisions regarding a further economic support package [CAB-21-MIN-0425 refers]. On 21 October 2021 the CMG agreed to appropriate an additional \$1,320 million for RSP payments on 12 November, 26 November, and 10 December 2021.

### Legislative Implications

131 I will make or amend an Order under section 11 of the COVID-19 Public Health Response Act 2020 informed by Cabinet's decision.

### Impact Analysis

132 The Treasury has determined that the regulatory proposals in this paper are exempt from the requirement to provide a Regulatory Impact Statement.

### Human Rights

- 133 Section 9(2)(h) [Redacted]
- 134 Section 9(2)(h) [Redacted]
- 135 Section 9(2)(h) [Redacted]
- 136 Section 9(2)(h) [Redacted]
- 137 Section 9(2)(h) [Redacted]
- 138 Section 9(2)(h) [Redacted]
- 139 Section 9(2)(h) [Redacted]

Proactively Released



Section 9(2)(h)

140 Section 9(2)(h)

### Population impacts

141 The impacts of community outbreaks of COVID-19 (and the associated Alert Level measures put in place) on vulnerable populations have been discussed earlier in this paper.

### Consultation

142 This paper was prepared by the COVID-19 Group within the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet. The Ministry of Health reviewed the paper and provided specific input and text, including advice on the course of the outbreak, the public health response, and the views and recommendations of the Director-General of Health. The Crown Law Office advised on New Zealand Bill of Rights Act implications.

143 The Treasury, Te Puni Kōkiri, the Ministry of Social Development, Ministry for Ethnic Communities, and Ministry for Pacific Peoples have provided input into relevant parts of the paper. The Treasury, the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment, Ministry of Transport, Customs and Police were consulted on the paper.

### Communications and proactive release

144 The Prime Minister will communicate the decisions set out in this paper after Cabinet agreement. I intend to proactively release this paper after Cabinet consideration subject to redaction as appropriate under the Official Information Act 1982.

### Recommendations

The Minister for COVID-19 Response recommends that Cabinet:

- 1 note that since Tuesday 17 August 2021, 3,348 community cases of COVID-19 have been identified in New Zealand (as at 9am Sunday 31 October);
- 2 note that on Monday 18 October Cabinet agreed to:
  - 2.1 keep Auckland at current Alert Level 3 (stage one of the three-stage reduction);

- 2.2 keep the relevant parts of the Waikato at Alert 3 area until 11.59pm Friday 22 October 2021, subject to further public health advice to be provided on Thursday 21 October 2021, and confirmation by COVID-19 Ministers with Power to Act on Friday 22 October;
- 2.3 move Northland to Alert Level 2 from 11.59pm Tuesday 19 October 2021;
- 2.4 keep the rest of New Zealand at Alert Level 2;
- 2.5 review Alert Level settings for all New Zealand on Monday 1 November 2021 [CAB-21-MIN-0422 refers];
- 3 note that on Wednesday 27 October 2021 the Ministers for COVID-19 Response agreed to move the Waikato Alert Level 3 area to stage one of the reduced Alert Level 3 from 11.59pm on Wednesday 27 October 2021, to be next reviewed on Monday 1 November 2021;
- 4 note the public health risk assessment of community transmission within:
  - 4.1 Auckland is high; and
  - 4.2 the rest of New Zealand (excluding parts of the Waikato currently at Alert Level 3 and Christchurch) is low;

#### *Alert Levels*

- 5 note the Director-General of Health's interim public health advice is:
  - 5.1 Auckland remain at Alert Level 3 stage one until at least 11.59pm Monday 15 November;
  - 5.2 Christchurch remain at Alert Level 2 for the time being pending further case investigation and test results;
  - 5.3 the rest of New Zealand (excluding part of the Waikato currently at Alert Level 3 and Christchurch) remain at Alert Level 2 until at least 11.59pm Monday 15 November;
- 6 agree an appropriate measure in response to the level of public health risk would be to:
  - 6.1 keep Auckland and the relevant parts of the Waikato at Alert Level 3 (stage one of the three-stage reduction) until 11.59pm Tuesday 16 November; and
  - 6.2 the rest of New Zealand remain at Alert Level 2 until 11.59pm Tuesday 16 November;
- 7 agree Cabinet next reviews Alert Level settings for all New Zealand on Monday 15 November;

- 8 agree Ministers with Power to Act review and take decisions in the week of Monday 8 November, informed by public health advice, on whether Auckland and/or the Waikato should move to stage two of the three-stage Alert Level 3 reduction, subject to sufficient evidence supporting consideration of a move ahead of the next Cabinet review;
- 9 note the Director-General of Health recommended consideration should be given to settings for outdoor gatherings and events to allow no limits on gathering size and that I will consider this following future public health risk assessments along with whether we can step down to stage two of Alert Level 3;

*Additional Alert level boundary permissions for building and construction*

- 10 note on Monday 18 October, Cabinet noted the Minister for COVID-19 Response would bring a proposal back to Cabinet on 1 November on whether to allow workers involved in building and construction of infrastructure that contributes to government priority projects to cross Alert Level boundaries [CAB-21-MIN-0422 refers];
- 11 note, given transmission risk remains high in Auckland, the Minister for COVID-19 Response does not recommend making any changes to the Alert Level boundary permissions for building and construction at this time;

*Vaccination requirements for people transitioning Alert Level boundaries*

- 12 note on Monday 18 October, Cabinet agreed in principle, subject to further work on operational implications and consultation with affected industries, that people crossing the Alert Level boundary for work purposes be required to be vaccinated [CAB-21-MIN-0422 refers];
- 13 note officials advise this requirement could be implemented when the COVID-19 Vaccination Certificate is available for public use in early December 2021, with a dual obligation on individuals and PCBUs, and CVCs used to verify compliance at boundary checkpoints;
- 14 note officials have undertaken limited engagement with impacted sectors who are concerned about the requirement exacerbating supply chain concerns, increasing congestion at boundary checkpoints and recommended a lead in time of four to six weeks to enable them to prepare for the requirement coming into force;
- 15 note Cabinet decisions could be taken on the vaccination requirement to cross the Auckland Alert Level boundary on Monday 15 November when we will consider how to enable a pathway for vaccinated people across the Auckland boundary under the COVID-19 Protection Framework;

*Education*

- 16 note Cabinet previously agreed to Out of School Care and Recreation (OSCAR) programmes reopening in Auckland alongside the reopening of

schools and early learning services to all students, subject to the same vaccination and testing requirements and public health controls that apply to schools and early learning services [CAB 21-MIN-0422 refers];

- 17 agree OSCAR programmes in Alert Level 3 regions remain closed for now and that the Ministry of Social Development will continue working with the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Health on the appropriate timing and public health controls for reopening;
- 18 note the previous Cabinet decision for OSCAR providers to be subject to the same vaccination and testing requirements as education services will be maintained and that providers have been notified by the Ministry of Social Development so that preparations can be made;
- 19 note that an initial public health risk assessment on the impact of the return to face-to-face learning for Year 11 to 13 students on increased transmission will be provided by Thursday 4 November;
- 20 invite the Minister of Education to report back to Cabinet on 8 November on plans to further enable on-site learning for all students in Alert Level 3 areas; and

*Other matters*

- 21 agree that Cabinet's decision today will be communicated by the Prime Minister.

Hon Chris Hipkins  
**Minister for COVID-19 Response**

**Appendix 1 – Vaccine uptake by ethnicities within Auckland Metro DHBs as at 11:59pm 27 October 2021**

Ethnicity	DHB	First			Second		
		Doses	Doses %	To 90%	Doses	Doses %	To 90%
All	Waitemata	477,145	<b>91%</b>	0	410,477	<b>78%</b>	63,001
	Auckland	395,771	<b>93%</b>	0	346,533	<b>82%</b>	35,029
	Counties Manukau	425,799	<b>88%</b>	8,697	360,828	<b>75%</b>	73,668
	New Zealand	3,657,97	<b>87%</b>	130,181	3,018,83	<b>72%</b>	769,321
Māori	Waitemata	32,218	<b>78%</b>	4,784	24,031	<b>58%</b>	12,971
	Auckland	22,520	<b>81%</b>	2,493	17,261	<b>62%</b>	7,752
	Counties Manukau	45,584	<b>72%</b>	11,560	32,219	<b>51%</b>	24,925
	New Zealand	400,403	<b>70%</b>	113,544	285,593	<b>50%</b>	228,354
Pacific Peoples	Waitemata	31,649	<b>84%</b>	2,167	24,718	<b>66%</b>	9,098
	Auckland	39,081	<b>83%</b>	3,098	30,986	<b>66%</b>	11,193
	Counties Manukau	95,673	<b>82%</b>	9,175	75,416	<b>65%</b>	29,432
	New Zealand	<b>240,109</b>	<b>84%</b>	<b>17,904</b>	<b>188,522</b>	<b>66%</b>	<b>69,491</b>