

**PRESS CONFERENCE: TUESDAY, 11 AUGUST 2020**

**PM:** Kia ora koutou katoa. Good evening, everyone. After 102 days, we have our first cases of COVID-19 outside of a managed isolation or quarantine facility in New Zealand. Shortly, I will ask Dr Bloomfield to set out the details of the cases involved. While we have all worked incredibly hard to prevent this scenario, we have also planned and prepared for it. We have a resurgence plan that we are now activating. That plan is based on everything that we have learnt as a country to date about COVID-19. It's also based on what we've seen from resurgence overseas. Those plans, though, are, of course, based on what we know about the cases in front of us, so I will pass to Dr Bloomfield, who will set out those details. Then I will share with you the decisions that have been made in response, through meetings with officials and also after Ministers convened this evening, and set out what it will mean for everyone. First, Dr Bloomfield.

**Dr Ashley Bloomfield:** Thank you, Prime Minister. Kia ora. So as the PM has said, we actually have four confirmed cases of COVID-19 in one family, acquired from an unknown source. The first case to present was a person in their 50s who lives in South Auckland. That person was swabbed yesterday when they presented to their general practitioner with symptoms. That test was processed twice and returned positive, and a second swab today also returned a positive result. Importantly, the person has no history of overseas travel, and as per our usual protocol, we worked very closely with Auckland Regional Public Health to interview the person. We've sprung into action, and, in fact, all those family members residing in the same household—there were another six—were all tested, and three of the six have returned positive test results. The other three were negative.

Other close contacts from workplaces have already been contacted and put into self-isolation and are being tested, whether symptomatic or asymptomatic. All close contacts remain in self-isolation for 14 days regardless of their test result, while casual contacts go into self-isolation and can only leave self-isolation once they return a negative test. In addition, we are working over the next few days to test all people working at our borders and in our managed isolation facilities, to help us trace the possible origin of this case where we don't currently know the source.

Now, there are no barriers to anyone who has cold- or flu-like symptoms getting tested. Testing is free, and as I have said previously—and it's even more relevant now—if you are offered a test, please take it. In Auckland, the four community testing centres—Northcote, Grafton, Henderson, and Wiri—will be operating with more staff and for longer hours over coming days. The testing centres that are in Auckland in the Waitemātā and Counties Manukau DHBs are already preparing to receive more people, and there will be further details on the ministry website tonight. Those DHBs are also planning pop-up clinics over coming days, and they will publicise locations and hours of these clinics. We will work closely with DHBs and primary care around the country to ensure additional testing capacity is available to meet the expected increase in demand from people with symptoms, and I strongly encourage any New Zealander with symptoms, whether in the Auckland region or outside it, to please be tested.

We have been saying for some weeks it was inevitable that New Zealand would get another case of community transmission. This is a tricky virus. We have been working on the basis that it could be at any time and have been preparing for that time. That time is now. The health system is well prepared, and the important thing now is that we stop the spread of the virus in our community.

As we did in the early days of the virus emerging, we need to stamp it out. There are things that every single New Zealander now needs to do. We have done these before. Continue or get back to stringent hand hygiene: washing for 20 seconds with soap and water or regular use of an alcohol-based hand gel; sneeze and cough into your elbow. If you or a family member are unwell, wherever you live in New Zealand, stay at home and seek advice from

your GP or Healthline about getting a test. Practise physical distancing of 2 metres wherever possible. And, most recently, our advice around the use of masks, which has been updated: please consider wearing a mask in spaces or places where it is hard to physically distance. If you have any concerns, please seek advice from Healthline or your GP. If you have not already, please take this opportunity to download the NZ COVID Tracer app. It will be an essential tool in helping us contact you if we need to as part of our follow-up on this case.

Finally, our contact-tracing team will, of course, be in contact with anyone who may be identified as a contact, whether casual or close, of this case. Please be responsive if you are contacted, return the call, and assist our efforts to rapidly identify and isolate and test any possible cases. The case is a wake-up call against any complacency that may have set in. We cannot afford to let this virus spread. We are working to not let it happen here, what has happened in other places that have seen resurgences like this. We have done this before, and we can and will do it again. Thank you, Prime Minister.

**PM:** Thank you. As you will have heard from Dr Bloomfield, we have four cases, all in one household. More than one workplace, however, is involved. Contact tracing is under way, but currently we know that of those workplaces, it means that we are not talking about one distinct suburb in Auckland who may likely have been affected by those who have tested positive. You'll also have heard that our first cases still leave questions to be answered, the most important of which is tracing this case back to its original origin. The reason that is important is because when we're able to do that, we can be much more certain about tracing and isolating all close contacts. When we can't do that, it means we have to take a precautionary approach.

At this stage, we have not yet been able to determine the source of these cases. There is no immediate link that we have found as yet to a managed isolation facility, that we're aware of, and there is no yet known connection to any high-risk individuals, such as those who work at our border. Therefore, we need to take a much more precautionary approach until we can find the source of this case, and make sure that we reduce the risk of wider spread.

One of the most important lessons we've learnt from overseas is the need to go hard and go early and stamp out flare ups to avoid the risk of wider outbreak. As disruptive as it is, a strong and rapid health response remains the best long-term economic response. In line with our precautionary approach, we will be asking Aucklanders to take swift action with us. As of 12 noon tomorrow—Wednesday, 12 August—we will be moving Auckland to level 3 restrictions for a period of three days, until midnight on Friday. These three days will give us time to assess the situation, gather information, make sure we have widespread contact tracing so we can find out more about how this case arose and make decisions on how to respond to it once we have further information.

Let me set out what that means for Aucklanders and the rest of New Zealand. We're asking people in Auckland to stay home to stop the spread. This means doing the simple things that you'll already be familiar with to prevent picking up the virus or passing it on to others. First, act as if you have COVID and as if the people around you have COVID. At level 3, you're asked to stay at home in your bubble other than for essential movements, such as going to the supermarket or local recreation. If you are in Auckland, you must work from home unless you are an essential service worker. All schools and childcare facilities in Auckland are closed as of tomorrow morning, except for the children of essential service workers. Those who are involved will remember that at level 3, we allow you to access schools and early childhood for—level 3—for essential service workers only. All public facilities, bars, restaurants, and businesses must close by midday tomorrow. Gatherings of more than 10 people in Auckland, again, will be restricted and are restricted, again, for funerals, tangihanga, and wedding services only. In the rest of the country, gatherings, of course, though—I'll outline in further detail momentarily.

Travelling into Auckland is prohibited unless you normally reside there and are travelling home. If you are currently in Auckland but do not normally reside there, you also can leave to go home, but we are asking you to be very conscious of your health, and if you begin to display any symptoms, please get tested.

We are defining the area covered as Auckland and covered by level 3 restrictions as the geographic boundary of the Auckland super-city, which extends from Wellsford in the north to Pukekohe in the south. Police will be issuing further guidance on parameters, including roadblock use, first thing in the morning.

As you will recall, all key services—supermarkets, pharmacies, medical centres—they do remain open, so food and supplies will continue to be readily available. Food delivery is also available, as you'll recall, at level 3. Please do not rush to the supermarket tonight. You'll recall, as when we were in level 3 on the last occasion, supermarkets will be open. There will be ample stock on the shelves. There is no reason to go out and make any purchases this evening. If you operated as an essential service under level 4 and level 3 last time, then those are the settings we revert to at level 3 again. If in doubt, stay at home tomorrow until you have clarity from your employer.

That then brings me to the rest of New Zealand. We will be moving the rest of the country, outside of Auckland, to level 2. This will come into place from midday tomorrow and run through till midnight on Friday—so, the same period of time that we're applying restrictions for Auckland. That means social distancing applies, and mass gatherings in that time will need to be limited to 100 people. And, of course, all of the other guidance you'll be used to from level 2 applies again as well. I know that this information will be very difficult to receive. We had all hoped not to find ourselves in this position again, but we had also prepared for it, and as a team, we have also been here before. We know if we have a plan and stick to it, we can work our way through very difficult and unknown situations.

Before I finish, I want to talk briefly about some of the additional plans that we have in place. As the director-general has set out, Auckland regional health will be standing up a mass testing programme across the region, where we will seek to test tens of thousands of people over the coming days in order to understand any potential unidentified cases in the community. It's our intention to test everyone who works at the border and everyone who works in managed isolation facilities, with a focus on Auckland. We will also be undertaking wide testing of those who are symptomatic in Auckland. Please, though, I ask you: don't visit your GP or a community testing station if you are perfectly well. We are seeking to test those who are symptomatic and those who are working in those high-risk areas. More details of the location of these CBACs and guidance on who should get a test we will be providing again in the morning.

A final word on mask use. We now know that these can be effective in reducing the spread of COVID. If you are in Auckland, we ask that you use a mask when you're accessing essential services. For the rest of the country, we advise their use if you're in a place where social distancing is difficult—so, for instance, public transport.

Let me finish by saying this: while this initial three-day lockdown will mainly affect the Auckland region, I am asking the team of 5 million to stand ready again as well. Together we've beaten the virus before, and with fast action and by acting together, we can do so again. We have come too far to go backwards. I'm asking New Zealanders to once again be strong and be kind. If you know someone in Auckland, give them a call, reach out, check that they're OK. If you are in Auckland, please make sure that your neighbours are OK. Ensure they're looked after and that they have the supplies and the support they need. We know what to do. We know what to do because we've successfully done it before. Please stay home if you're in Auckland. Be vigilant. We will get through this. We're happy to take questions.

**Media:** Prime Minister, if you don't trace the source of these four people over the next four days, is it likely that those level 3 restrictions will be extended until you find the source?

**PM:** Of course, it is about gathering as much information as possible in the next three days, and we won't just do that through contact tracing; we will also do that through wide testing, not only of those, obviously, working in those high-risk areas—and that's why we intend to test everyone at the border—but also in our managed isolation facilities and those symptomatic. If we are unable to identify the source, what we should identify is whether or

not we have wider geographic spread and whether or not we have a number of cases beyond the family that has been identified here. Dr Bloomfield?

**Dr Ashley Bloomfield:** I think you've summarised it well, Prime Minister. There are two things we want to do and we will be working apace to do over the next three days. The first is to identify the extent of this outbreak and control it. The second is to identify the source.

**Media:** What are those workplaces in question?

**PM:** I'll leave that to Dr Bloomfield, who has the information. Of course, those workplaces that are affected are being contacted. But I think the important point I wanted to make is that it would not have been possible to successfully isolate one small part of Auckland from there. Interviews that are being undertaken—a precautionary approach—does point to us needing, unfortunately, to ask all of Auckland to take a precautionary approach with us.

**Media:** And none of those workplaces had any connection the border or travel in any way?

**PM:** Not that we've identified, but, of course, those interviews have been undertaken with the family and the original case as we speak, and then, from there, moving into the wider workplaces and interviewing others. But Dr Bloomfield?

**Dr Ashley Bloomfield:** Two things to say there, and I don't have the detail of the workplaces with me, but in the two workplaces in question, immediate action has been taken to identify close contacts, isolate those people, and, in fact, shut down one of the workplaces so that further wide testing can happen.

**Media:** Are they customer facing? Are they workplaces where you would see a lot of people coming in and out?

**PM:** Just based on the conversations I've had, no, they're not. Neither of them are.

**Media:** What about people who've recently been to Auckland, such as yourself?

**PM:** Yes, and that's where we're asking people to be very mindful of their own health and wellbeing. We're asking that if they feel unwell, immediately isolate, seek advice, and seek a test if that's the advice you receive. But at this stage, that's the extent of the advice for those who have recently been in Auckland.

**Media:** And what about yourself? You're still, obviously, on the campaign trail, hitting up lots of different parts of the country. Are you going to change your plans because of this?

**PM:** Yes, I will. I anticipate that over at least the next three days, I'll likely be based here in Wellington.

**Media:** But this will go on for longer than three days, though, won't it?

**PM:** I'm not going to speculate at this stage. We've set out a plan that should give us much more information in order to base further decisions. The view was: move quickly with a precautionary approach, with the hope, of course, that we can ascertain that information that will be able to limit the effect on other New Zealanders as much as possible. The alternative is to wait. That runs the risk, if we do have a wider number of individuals affected, of the spread continuing to escalate.

**Media:** And talking about the wait, why has it taken so long for you to tell the public?

**PM:** So I was advised at 4 o'clock this afternoon, whilst I was in the van travelling directly here to Wellington. In that time, additional interviewing took place of those individuals to see if we could ascertain their connection to any high-risk areas, such as borders or MIQ, because that may have given us the option of isolating and contact tracing. We haven't been able to ascertain those connections. Also, that gave a chance for Ministers with power to act to be convened to make sure that the orders that need to be in place were able to be drafted, and just to ensure that all of the information we needed to provide the public. We have moved, though, very, very quickly, as you can see from the amount that's happened in that space of time.

**Media:** If all Aucklanders are supposed to stay at home, does that mean no movement in and out of the super-city as well?

**PM:** Correct. We're asking only those who are returning home to enter into Auckland and only those who are leaving to go home to exit Auckland. Those who reside there we are asking to stay there. The whole point of this precautionary approach is to try and isolate any potential spread outside of that region into other areas.

**Media:** How likely is it that these four cases are self-contained, or can the public expect that we might see more cases in the coming days?

**PM:** Given we haven't—and I'll let Dr Bloomfield. But given we haven't yet identified the original source case, I'd say it is likely we will see other cases as we start tracing that.

**Dr Ashley Bloomfield:** Yes, we're expecting to see other cases, and as was the situation earlier in the year, we want to find all those other cases as soon as possible and identify and isolate any contacts. Hence the work that has been going in since 3 o'clock today to ramp up the capacity and capability for testing both this evening, including at urgent care centres across Auckland, but also in the morning, and there will be pop-up clinics as well as longer hours and more extensive testing at those existing clinics.

**Media:** Given the low level of surveillance testing and given the fact that this case is not immediately at the border, can we be sure that COVID ever really was stamped out, or is there a possibility that this has been somewhere in Auckland since March?

**Dr Ashley Bloomfield:** I think if you reflect back to that period of time when we were coming down through level 3 and 2, we did extensive testing right across the country, including broad ethnicity spread as well. So, yes, I think we can be confident, and the fact that we've gone over 100 days, again, I think lends—if you look at the number of tests that have been done and the geographical and ethnicity spread of those tests, I think we can be very confident. So this is why we have continued that community surveillance testing of symptomatic people, and it shows that it was the right thing to do, and now we've also got a clear plan in place about what to do.

**PM:** Keeping in mind that even if you've got undetected cases in your community, very unfortunately, at some point one will elevate and escalate into your hospital system. We have not seen that, but that's the other indicator if you've got undetected transmission in your community, and we have not seen that.

**Media:** Realistically, if you are expecting more cases to come up, the decision at the end of the three days will be whether or not there is another two weeks or so at level 3 for Auckland or a move to level 4 if there are more cases.

**PM:** Again, I don't wish to predetermine that at this point. If, for instance, there's a scenario where we were able to rapidly identify the source case, we have confidence of our level of isolation and contact tracing of all close contacts around that case, that is a potential scenario. But again, that is why we are giving ourselves that 72 hours to do that large-scale rapid testing, isolation, and contact tracing, and we will be updating everyone on Friday about what our expectations are of the next step. In the meantime, daily updates will give people a sense of the progress that's being made and the information we're able to gather.

**Media:** Dr Bloomfield, are you comfortable with that 72 hours, or did you advise the Government that it should in fact be longer than that?

**Dr Ashley Bloomfield:** In fact, there was very quick and unanimous agreement amongst officials and also in our discussions with our colleagues in Auckland that the three days would give us a good amount of time to do quite extensive testing and the contact tracing, which is already well under way, to identify any possible close contacts and casual contacts—have them tested. So the three days is a good amount of time for us to be able to get good information about the extent of the outbreak and whether it is contained and also the link back to where that case might have come from.

**PM:** Just keeping in mind these are very significant decisions. Moving an entire city—and New Zealand’s largest city—into level 3 restrictions is not a decision we take lightly. We need to make sure we have as much information as possible, and this move means that we can be cautious but also make sure that we have more information before we make any decisions that have a longer-term impact. We also are mindful that if we make decisions that have a longer-term impact, at that point we need to be talking about other financial supports and so on that would be necessary. This gives us a window to have a good assessment over what it is that has emerged today.

**Media:** And on the logistics of level 3 again, last time there was butchers and greengrocers that sort of came into controversy. Are we looking at them being closed, or this time will they be allowed to open?

**PM:** We’ll keep the same restrictions that you will recall from level 3 in place again at level 3. So do keep in mind that that actually allows takeaways and services that weren’t able to be in place at level 4.

**Media:** Could you please tell us a little bit more about the cases? What are the ages of the confirmed cases?

**Dr Ashley Bloomfield:** At this point, I would rather do that tomorrow, because I would like to have a discussion with the family.

**Media:** Are there children involved?

**Dr Ashley Bloomfield:** Yes, there are. I can say that the ages do include one child. What I would say is that a child that is a case is a preschooler who does not attend an early childhood education facility.

**Media:** And what kind of symptoms are the cases showing? Are they quite severe symptoms?

**Dr Ashley Bloomfield:** So the person who presented as the first case did have fever, a cough—you know, so quite noticeable symptoms. The partner of that person also had obvious symptoms—in fact, that preceded that of the case that we diagnosed first.

**Media:** And how long had they been experiencing those symptoms? Is there a risk that they’ve been out and about and have spread it—they could’ve been the spreaders?

**Dr Ashley Bloomfield:** Yes, it was about a four- to five-day period from the symptom onset to when the test was done. So again, that’s one reason we are following up all possible close contacts. In fact, what we have found so far is that there is a relatively small number of close contacts, both in the workplace and outside of the workplace.

**Media:** What suburb do they live in and where are the workplaces?

**Dr Ashley Bloomfield:** At this point, the only information I’d like to share is that they are from South Auckland and that the workplaces are beyond South Auckland, so they’re in other parts of Auckland.

**Media:** Why?

**Dr Ashley Bloomfield:** Because that’s the request of the family at this point.

**PM:** So we’ll look to provide more information in the morning. It’s just a matter of making sure that when we do so, we’re not in a situation of identifying directly individuals, because there are a small number of people involved in some of those workplaces, which would make them identifiable. Obviously, the fact we’re taking this precautionary approach means that we are ensuring the health and safety of everyone in Auckland, by taking this precautionary approach. Those who are directly involved with the workplaces of these individuals have already and are already being contacted directly to make sure that they have that extra requirement to be in self-isolation and to be tested, but again, we will look to provide more information in the morning. I know this will be an area of interest.

**Media:** If you've been in Auckland the last few days and you've flown back to your home elsewhere in New Zealand, should you be working from home from tomorrow?

**PM:** Yeah, and so this is where we are asking people to take a precautionary approach. We do want them to monitor their symptoms. We do want people to be cautious, and we are asking everyone outside of Auckland to socially distance, and so that is part of the requirements that we're asking of people. People will engage their common sense in this as well.

**Media:** Obviously, rest homes are where the most vulnerable are—

**PM:** Yes, I'll ask Dr Bloomfield to speak to rest homes.

**Media:** Right. Are you looking at maybe locking down rest homes? That's where all the deaths have kind of popped up in New Zealand. How are you going to protect the vulnerable?

**Dr Ashley Bloomfield:** Yeah. So, earlier in the year when the outbreak started to gather pace, before we even went into an alert level 3 or 4 situation, we had advised aged residential care facilities—and many of them had already. We advised them to stop all visits. Our advice to aged residential care countrywide at the moment is to also stop visits for the time being, certainly over these next few days, because we want to take a very precautionary approach with that setting.

**Media:** And will you be testing people who work in aged residential care facilities?

**Dr Ashley Bloomfield:** Not at this point, recalling that there is already a protocol in place where all those who work in aged residential care do have symptom checks before they start work, and, obviously, part of shutting down, visitors will be making sure that those facilities are enforcing that and making sure it's routinely done.

**Media:** But surely, if that's the most vulnerable place, why wouldn't you be testing?

**Dr Ashley Bloomfield:** Because there's no indication yet that we should test. The important first action is to close all visiting to those rest homes, and then we will take it from there. Again, this is this first few days. The actions we are taking immediately are in Auckland, as outlined by the Prime Minister, and anyone symptomatic, including those who work in or who stay in aged residential care facilities, should be tested.

**Media:** One of the things that happened during level 2 and level 3 last time was elderly were asked to stay home. Under level 2 for the rest of New Zealand, are you asking—

**PM:** At the moment, we're asking everyone outside of Auckland to apply the level 2 restrictions. So that is as it stands. Obviously, in Auckland we're asking everyone to stay at home.

**Media:** Sorry, there were two different level 2s for over-70s.

**PM:** You'll remember as we came down, at level 2 we weren't asking at that point every single person to stay home. But again, level 2: social distancing, good hand-washing regimes, making sure you are not leaving your home if you are unwell. And we're asking, if you're in public places that it's a little harder to socially distance, for people to wear a mask. In Auckland, level 3.

**Media:** Dr Bloomfield, the gentleman who tested positive for COVID-19 in South Korea recently—he also resided in South Auckland, by memory. Are you concerned that these two situations could be linked?

**Dr Ashley Bloomfield:** We're not, and we've been through a very thorough process with that person who tested positive on arrival in South Korea, and very much concluded that everything about that situation suggested it was a positive test of someone who'd had an earlier infection some months before.

**PM:** Keeping in mind that there was also roughly a hundred close contacts around that person—all tested; all tested negative—and, of course, the evidence suggesting that, from the swab, that it was an old infection.

**Media:** As the testing goes on, within how many days do you expect to see—could we, for example, see tomorrow some of those close contacts coming back testing positive or negative?

**PM:** Yes, the turnaround can be very quick. Obviously, we've already turned around—from the time that there was a positive test in the family, we've already turned around testing in the wider family already to identify those other positives. So we can turn that around very quickly.

**Media:** Do you have concerns for wider contact tracing given that there's been quite a slow uptake on using the app?

**PM:** I'll let Dr Bloomfield speak to that, but already we have good information that's already being actioned.

**Dr Ashley Bloomfield:** So two comments there. First of all, the really significant information development over the last few months has been our national contact tracing solution, which all our public health units are on. Just to give you an example of the value of that, tonight, as the public health unit in Auckland was interviewing the person and the information was being entered into the system there, we could view it nationally, and, in fact, then it's visible to us nationally and, indeed, to other public health units if they need it. So that's the most significant and really valuable asset we have for our contact tracing, as well as the fact we have upped the capacity in our public health units across the country to be able to trace up to 350 cases per day, and we have additional capacity nationally. The app itself—so I'm encouraging people to download it. Even if you don't use it—and I encourage people to use it—just by registering and giving us your up-to-date contact information, that's significantly useful. So please go ahead and do that if you haven't already.

**PM:** Dr Bloomfield, this is a very good reminder of why everyone needs to use the app. Please: COVID Tracer. The Ministry of Health have made that app available. Download it. Use it. We'll be asking businesses again to put in place those QR codes. This is a vital and useful tool for us. If you don't use a phone that has that technology, please keep a diary of all places you've been.

**Media:** Has the app been used in this particular case, though? Have you issued an exposure notification yet, or are you planning to do so?

**Dr Ashley Bloomfield:** Not yet, no, and not planning to at the moment. It depends on the extent of whether we have to send a message out more widely. But because we're taking quite significant action here in Auckland and as the Prime Minister has outlined, then we don't need to send out that notification.

**PM:** But also, of course, continuing to undertake all of that contact tracing around that family as we speak.

**Media:** Would it be helpful for Aucklanders or, indeed, all New Zealanders to think back over the last two weeks about who they came in contact with and where they were?

**PM:** Yes, absolutely. It's always an exercise we ask. That would be a useful exercise for anyone, particularly in Auckland, when you're at home over the next three days—just sitting down, thinking about the places you've been over the last two weeks, reminding yourself and keeping a log, but just making sure that you're, again, getting into that practice of doing that at all times. The app is there to make it easier for you, but it is not the only way you can record your movements.

**Media:** Prime Minister, a lot of Aucklanders and New Zealanders will be having this sinking feeling in their stomach at the moment. What's your message to them?

**PM:** I absolutely understand, and that is a completely natural feeling. We've had 102 days, and it was very easy to feel perhaps like New Zealand was out of the woods. But of all the countries in the world, we have gone the longest. No country has gone as far as we did without having resurgence. So because we were the only ones, that meant that we always knew we had to plan, and we have planned. Now that moment has arrived where we need to

utilise that plan. So my request is not to be dispirited or disheartened. When we've rolled out our plans before, it has worked, so I'm asking that everyone joins us on that journey again, reminds themselves of what we had to do last time, and just continues to stay with us as we keep sharing all the information we have as we try and get back control again of these cases that we've identified. Again, this is something we have prepared for.

**Media:** Should New Zealanders outside of Auckland avoid interregional travel? If they have flights booked already—say, Dunedin to Christchurch—should they cancel them?

**PM:** So again, we're keeping the rest of the country at level 2 at this stage, and so, of course, that means—you'll recall at level 2, we allowed interregional travel, but we're asking no one to go into Auckland unless they're returning home and only those who are leaving to go home to exit out of Auckland. If you're an Aucklander and you have a home elsewhere, please stay in Auckland. That is our request of you. We're asking people to apply the same common sense that we used before. When it comes to people who have been in Auckland, I am going to get a bit more advice around that. At this stage, we are saying to people to go home, keep an eye on your wellness, but I will get a little bit more advice about what we do for those who have come out of Auckland, just to make sure we're consistent. But you can go home if you're in Auckland and that's not where you live.

**Media:** So for now, people who have been in Auckland recently, they don't have to—

**PM:** Sorry?

**Media:** So people who have been in Auckland recently, for now they don't have to—

**PM:** I will get some further advice on that. At this stage, though, we're saying do go home if you're in Auckland. Do go home. Use your common sense. Keep in mind we have just put that region into a level 3 restricted area. Make sure that you are keeping an eye on your health and wellbeing. I'll give another update on our expectations on that group tomorrow. What I'll also do, because we've also, as discussed, rest homes—I will be asking Minister Jenny Salesa to engage with those facilities again, as we have in the past, to make sure that we are taking a precautionary approach there. Those are some of our highest-risk areas. Dr Bloomfield's already set out our expectations there, but I want to make sure it's as rigorous as possible, because it is an area where we know there is huge vulnerability.

**Media:** Can you clarify if the family is self-isolating at home, and if so, have you considered moving them to a quarantine facility?

**PM:** Yes, we are discussing with them a possible move to a quarantine facility.

**Media:** But for now they're separated from the positive and negative?

**PM:** Yes, now they are as a family. They are as a family. They've only just received their results, and we're discussing with them movement into quarantine.

**Media:** Are there security staff around their home?

**PM:** At the moment, public health staff are with them.

**Media:** People are already streaming into the supermarkets in Auckland after this announcement. Are you worried about that?

**PM:** Again, I can only reiterate what I said in the beginning. I absolutely understand. It's a completely natural reaction. It happens around public holidays as well, when people know that there are closures, but there are no closures here. We've all experienced before that the supermarkets will not shut. They will remain open. People will continue to be able to access them. So there is no need for anyone to go out now and stock up. They'll be open tomorrow. They'll be open the next day. They'll be open right the way through.

**Media:** We're getting reports that it's already happening.

**PM:** Look, I know. That's just been shared with me. Again, I can only reiterate, as I have, there is no need. They are an essential service. So are pharmacies. Dairies will remain

open as well. It's just as people will recall when we were in level 3 last time. You will even be able to get a takeaway coffee with distance. So all of those things remain in place.

**Media:** There's a sold out Blues v Crusaders match planned for Saturday at Eden Park. What's the message to people?

**PM:** I expect that our Minister for Sport will engage with them directly. At the moment, though, we're keeping these restrictions till midnight Friday. I understand that that creates uncertainty for some of those major fixtures, so we'll be in dialogue with them. But at the moment, we're keeping it midnight Friday, with updates as we go.

**Media:** Could you explain what happens after—sorry, I know it's hard to predict the future, but if you manage to determine there's no community transmission, find the source of this, will you move straight back down into level 1 or will you bring down the levels as you did?

**PM:** Yeah, we've always tended to take a precautionary approach. We'll make that assessment at the time, but I imagine that we will be on guard, having found these cases in our community at this point. You won't have to necessarily wait until Friday to get a sense of the progress we're making—or not. We will continue to give updates. I expect that we're looking at another press conference—at this point, mid-morning tomorrow. We will be making sure that Commissioner Andrew Coster is available to give further information around some of the ways that the roadblocks and checks will be operating, and, of course, we'll be making sure that there's information available for morning media as well.

**Media:** So it's very, very unlikely that there will be any events in Auckland this weekend?

**PM:** Look, that's—I haven't ruled that out, but again, we do need to take a cautious approach, as we have with this decision today.

**Media:** During Victoria's second wave, a lot of people there became really frustrated having to go through this process again. We saw hundreds of people getting fines, for example. Are you concerned that New Zealanders, and particularly Aucklanders, will either become complacent or just frustrated and break the rules?

**PM:** Do you know, I've always, of course, known that we are our own people, our own country. We've taken our own approach to COVID, so I'm not going to make an assumption about what will happen here in New Zealand based on what's happened in Australia, because we've always done things our own way. We know that by following the guidelines that we set and the alert levels that we put in place originally, that it worked. No country in the world was free of community transmission as long as New Zealand has been. Now, we also know that other countries have had resurgence and have got them back under control, so we're asking for every New Zealander's help in doing that. If we get this right, we can limit the effect on the rest of New Zealand, but we'll only be able to do that if we do follow these rules, as we did in the first place.

**Media:** How strictly will these rules be enforced?

**PM:** In the same way that we have before, so nothing has changed in that regard. The orders will be in place. We are asking people to comply with them, and we're doing that for a 72-hour period.

**Media:** The incubation period—there's a two-week incubation period, and previously testing didn't really come through. Like, cases didn't really come through in testing for like 10 days. Is it likely that we'll need to be at level 3—Auckland will need to be at level 3—for at least two weeks? Should people expect that?

**PM:** Again, as I've said, we'll make sure that everyone's well aware of the decisions that need to be made once we have more information. But it is a very big decision to shut down an entire city for a two-week period without having full information around the source of this case. So I feel very strongly that we need to give ourselves the ability to answer those questions before we ask that of all of Auckland. I believe we should have much more information over the next 72 hours. We're going to undertake widespread mass testing, continue the interviews across the range of those individuals affected, and see if we can

identify those sources, which may then limit our need to continue with these restrictions for long periods of time.

**Media:** But even in the best case scenario, very widespread testing and no positive results at all—given the incubation period, surely, you know, a precautionary approach would require level 3 to be longer—

**PM:** Of course, rather than working through hypotheticals, I'd much rather work through the evidence that we have, and we're likely to be able to gather much, much more information over the next 24, 48, 36 hours.

**Media:** A lot of people, including the Leader of the National Party, have said that there's a conspiracy theory going on, and that with all this talk about alert level 2 coming in, the Government knew more than it was sharing. Was that what's happened here? Can you put to bed any of those rumours?

**PM:** I've already shared with you the time line of when I was first informed. I'll let Dr Bloomfield speak to his own knowledge. I was informed of this case after exiting a gathering, a public gathering in Whanganui, which would have roughly been 4 p.m. today. I drove directly to Wellington. Dr Bloomfield?

**Dr Ashley Bloomfield:** Yes, so I was informed via a text, an urgent text, from the chief executive of Counties Manukau DHB in Auckland just before three, and we were on a Zoom call with a number of people within about five minutes and standing up the response very quickly and letting people know exactly what was happening. But that's the first indication we had. The test result came through with—a test that was done of a symptomatic person yesterday in general practice, and it just reiterates why we were doing that testing and that we had a plan ready to spring into action as soon as we got a result like this.

**Media:** Have you talked to Judith Collins today and have—

**PM:** Sorry?

**Media:** Have you talked to Judith Collins today, and are you getting any advice on postponing the election?

**PM:** So I spoke to the Leader of the Opposition, I'd say approximately 8.30 this evening, to advise her. That was immediately after I came off the call advising and discussing with Ministers our course of action. I then immediately spoke to the Mayor of Auckland and to the Leader of the Opposition. I advised her of the information we had about the case, the proposed course of action in response, and what we would be undertaking in the next period of time, as well, to ascertain further information. As for your second question around impact on the election, at this point my absolute focus is our immediate response to these cases. I've not given any consideration to any impact on the election at this stage. That's likely something that if needs be we would report on further down the track, but certainly not at this stage.

**Media:** Do you expect all political parties to put campaigning on hold, though?

**PM:** Well, ultimately, I'm expecting them to do the same thing we're asking of every New Zealander at this time for the next period until midnight on Friday: if they are resident in Auckland, to stay home; obviously, to comply with level 2 restrictions for the rest of the country. I absolutely understand the impact that will have. I too, obviously, will be changing plans and, over the next three days, expect that everything I had planned will be put to the wayside.

**Media:** And it is a realistic prospect that we could see the election delayed?

**PM:** I don't want to speculate on that at this point. Obviously, the Electoral Commission have always undertaken planning to allow an election at alert level 2. But again, anything beyond that right now for something that's six weeks away would be purely speculative.

**Media:** By tomorrow—Parliament's dissolving tomorrow—

**PM:** I'll take the last few questions.

**Media:** Is it appropriate to dissolve Parliament tomorrow, which, essentially, leaves New Zealand with no democratic accountability for the Government as we're going into what could be an extended state of emergency?

**PM:** So keeping in mind, of course, that that does not diminish or remove the ability of Cabinet to continue to make decisions, I intend to act in the exact same way I would if we were in a parliamentary recess, for instance. I will continue to maintain contact with the Leader of the Opposition. I've already indicated to her that I will do that. I intend to give her another update tomorrow, once we have further information and further details of the work that we'll be doing over the next three days. So in that sense, the dissolution of Parliament will actually not change the way I intend to behave with the Leader of the Opposition. OK. Thank you, everyone. We'll see you in the morning.

**conclusion of press conference**