

26 August 2020

Kia ora koutou

Thanks very much to you and all your staff for the extraordinary effort over the last two weeks in response to the re-emergence of COVID-19 in the community in Auckland.

In the 7 days between 16 August and 23 August, 99,114 lab tests for COVID-19 were processed across the country. This large volume of testing has supported the management and containment of the cluster. However, it is imperative that we continue to identify and isolate any further community cases as the cluster begins to tail off.

While the majority of our testing over the next short while will be focused on Auckland, I wish to provide you with some guidance on the Ministry of Health's expectations for testing across the country in the next 2-3 weeks and in particular over the next week. As signalled by the Minister of Health today, we are aiming to complete 70,000 tests across the next week, with approximately 30% of these outside of Auckland.

The key elements of this short-term strategy will be to:

1. Continue to quickly identify any new cases in the Auckland region (containment and source ascertainment)
2. Provide assurance that the border is secure and is supported by robust testing of people working in managed isolation and quarantine facilities and at our maritime and international air borders
3. Maintain a level of testing across New Zealand that is sufficient to identify any potential COVID-19 cases quickly and provide assurance that there is no undetected community transmission occurring.

To date, community testing has focused on symptomatic people. Given the high rates of testing over the last two weeks and the low rates of influenza-like illness (ILI) across the country this winter, community testing over the coming week should include surveillance testing of asymptomatic people. This is similar to what we did as we moved down alert levels earlier in the year.

So please ensure the following testing is happening in your DHB region over the coming seven days.

## **Community testing**

In addition to continuing to test all people who display symptoms consistent with COVID-19, please undertake asymptomatic surveillance testing including through the use of community-based 'pop-up' testing clinics at shopping centres, supermarkets, community facilities, churches, etc

## **Managed isolation and quarantine facility workforce testing**

For those DHBs that have MIQ facilities, all staff should be retested over the next 7-10 days.

## **Maritime and Air Port workforce testing**


For those DHBs with ports or international airports, all higher risk staff should be retested over the next 7-10 days (see list of higher risk staff below)

Can you please continue to report on the testing in your DHB (or region where relevant) to **COVID-19testing@health.govt.nz**

We will provide further advice later this week on testing expectations for the coming weeks and months and will work with you on developing implementation plans for sustainable testing.

Again, I wish to thank you for your continued efforts to support the health and well-being of New Zealanders.

Kind regards,



Dr Ashley Bloomfield

## **Appendix 1: Ports and International Airport Higher Risk Staff Definition**

We are requiring that selected border workers undertake a round of one-off testing, if they have worked in one of the following settings since 11:59pm on 25 August 2020. Testing is required to be completed by 11:59pm on Sunday, 6 September 2020.

### **Managed Isolation and Quarantine Facilities**

All staff who work at a Managed Isolation or Quarantine Facility

### **Port of Auckland and Port of Tauranga**

- pilots, or stevedores, carrying out work on or around an affected ship (a ship with a person on board who is required to be isolated or quarantined in accordance with the Maritime Border Order)
- any worker who carries out any other work at an affected port and has symptoms that suggest the presence of COVID-19
- any worker who boards or has boarded an affected ship at an affected port during the period covered by the order.

### **Auckland International Airport**

- border and other New Zealand government officials (including Customs, Immigration, Biosecurity/MPI, Aviation Security, Police)
- front of house airline and airport staff
- District Health Board staff and contractors
- retail, food, and beverage workers
- staff who handle baggage trolleys used by arriving or transiting international passengers  
cleaners.

