



# Adapting our approach through the Omicron outbreak

Briefing pack

23 March 2022

**Te Kāwanatanga o Aotearoa**  
New Zealand Government

Unite  
against  
COVID-19

## Reasons for the shift

- Cases appear to have peaked (e.g. in Auckland) and hospitalisations are expected to peak in late March
- We have a highly vaccinated population (of those eligible - 95% fully vaccinated, 73% boosted) and COVID-19 is increasingly widespread, building even higher levels of population immunity
- The COVID-19 Protection Framework was designed in the context of Delta
- These measures have seen us through the outbreak with comparatively low hospitalisations so far
- Restrictive public health measures can come with a heavy toll
- The Framework is complicated – we have an opportunity to simplify and streamline it

## Maintaining protections and our ability to respond to risk still matter

- Still need to reduce transmission as cases and hospitalisations decline
- There are likely to be more outbreaks of Omicron and new variants of concern – so we still need the COVID-19 Protection Framework
- But we also need to enable a more normal life to resume – weddings, funerals, faith services, events, businesses
- We are keeping the most effective public health measures in place – face masks, capacity limits, testing, isolation – and can flex our response depending on the risk

## **Protecting and supporting the vulnerable remains a priority**

- Workforce vaccination mandates will remain for the health and disability sector, prison staff, and border and MIQ workers but will continue to be regularly reviewed
- Face masks remain a key feature for indoor events, where COVID has been proven to spread more easily
- Isolation and testing remain key aspects of the response
- The government will retain a strong focus on the ongoing vaccination programme
- Care in the Community will continue and evolve to meet the needs of those most vulnerable

## **Businesses, communities, whānau and individuals will be supported to put in place measures that suit them**

- Further guidance is coming out that will help people identify ways to manage risk
  - While government restrictions are being eased, others can put in place the measures they need to keep themselves and others safe, particularly around the most vulnerable
  - Face masks, RATs, My Vaccine Pass, access to vaccines – will all remain for those who wish to use them or apply them to their workplaces
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# What will change and why?

## Capacity limits

- Outdoor capacity limits will be removed
- Indoor limits at Red are increasing to 200
- No capacity limits at Orange or Green
- Evidence that outdoors is less risk
- Little public health impact but great for businesses
- More flexibility in how risk is mitigated at events and gatherings

## Face masks

- Still required in same places at Red and Orange (aside from outdoor events)
- Not required but encouraged at Green
- Face masks very effective at reducing risk and enabling normal activities to resume, safely
- Green is guidance only level

## My Vaccine Pass

- No longer a requirement for entry into venues
- Infrastructure will be retained and updated for those who wish to continue using it
- Always a temporary measure
- Now have high vaccination rates

## Record keeping

- No longer a requirement to scan in or display a QR code
- Useful when contact tracing individual cases, but no longer a useful tool.

## A simplified COVID-19 Protection Framework

### Note:

- The changes for Red settings will take place from 11.59pm on Friday 25th March
- Removal of Vaccine Passes takes effect from 11.59pm on Monday 4th April.

# Changes to the Traffic Lights From 11.59pm Friday 25 March



RED	ORANGE	GREEN
Face masks required in most indoor settings	Face masks required in many indoor settings	Face masks encouraged indoors
Indoor capacity limits of 200 people. No outdoor capacity limits	No indoor or outdoor capacity limits	No indoor or outdoor capacity limits
Self-isolate for 7 days if you test positive or live with someone who has COVID-19	Self-isolate for 7 days if you test positive or live with someone who has COVID-19	Self-isolate for 7 days if you test positive or live with someone who has COVID-19

# Guidance: Meaning of indoors and outdoors

**Indoors spaces** are generally considered to be places that are completely or substantially enclosed by both of:

- a ceiling, roof, or similar overhead surface that substantially impedes the free flow of fresh, outdoor air into the space; **and**
- walls, sides, screens, or other similar surfaces that substantially impede the free flow of fresh, outdoor air in and out of the enclosed space.

*If you are operating at a venue that requires customers to spend time in an indoor space:*

- to travel directly through to an outdoor space, purchase goods, or use bathroom facilities, then the retail rules (i.e. capacity based on 1m distancing) likely apply to those defined spaces; or
- to consume food, socialise, watch entertainment, or otherwise intermingle for any period of time longer than necessary than to undertake the activities above (i.e. travel directly through to an outdoor space, purchase goods, or use bathroom facilities), then the indoor rules should apply to those defined spaces.

**Outdoors spaces** are generally considered to be places that are either:

- entirely open; or
- are only partially enclosed, in that the facility either:
  - does not have a ceiling, roof, or similar overhead surface that substantially impedes the free flow of fresh, outdoor air into the space; or
  - does not have walls, sides, screens, or other similar surfaces that substantially impede the free flow of fresh, outdoor air in and out of the enclosed space.

# Moving forward

At 11:59pm Friday 25 March:

- We will remain at Red
- The new Red settings will come into effect - outdoor capacity limits will be removed and indoor limits increased to 200 (for people who have a My Vaccine Pass)
- Record keeping will finish

On Monday 4 April:

- My Vaccine Pass will no longer be a government requirement (11:59pm)
- Workforce vaccination mandate for the teaching workforce will end, as will mandates for those at My Vaccine Pass venues (11:59pm)
- Cabinet will decide whether all or parts of the country can move to Orange