

Key System Issues & Risks

Risks If Omicron Enters the Community

Cases of Omicron are increasing overseas, and at the border, which make an outbreak in the community more likely. There are potential risks across the COVID-19 response, some of which include: Details regarding the Omicron variant are still emerging, with some details unknown, presenting challenges for the response.

The CPF system was set up to manage the Delta variant, whereas the Omicron variant appears more transmissible.

The testing and tracing system is at capacity and is likely to be overrun if a major outbreak of Omicron occurs.

Despite an anticipated lower need for hospitalisation overall compared to infection from prior variants, the expected increase in cases is likely to result in a higher impact on the health system.

Due to the anticipated faster spread of Omicron, higher likelihood of mild or asymptomatic cases, and likely strain on testing and tracing system, it is likely that more cases will be unreported.

Other countries have observed issues with business continuity as a result of the high cases associated with Omicron.

Mitigations: Work continues across government to prepare for a potential Omicron outbreak.

Source: Newshub 08 January 2022, NZ Herald 09 January 2022, NZ Herald 07 January 2022, RNZ 07 January 2022

MIQ Quarantine Shortage

The number of COVID-19 positive cases being detected at the border has been increasing steadily with the spread of the Omicron variant overseas, placing greater pressure on quarantine facilities for border and community cases. With the increased number of quarantine cases in facilities, there is a higher risk of inter-MIF transmission within a facility.

Mitigations: All MIQs staff, returnees, and community cases follow strict IPC protocols to ensure the mitigation of any inter-MIF transmission. MIQ is looking to convert facilities from isolation to dual quarantine and isolation to increase quarantine capacity whilst ensuring adequate isolation capacity for border returnees.

Source: MBIE: 11 January 2022 9.46 AM

Children Returning to School May Increase Transmission

Despite vaccination rates amongst 12-19 year olds being above 90%, public health experts have warned that having full attendance in schools may pose a risk of spreading COVID-19 particularly if Omicron were to break out in the community, although it is believed that transmission in schools is similar to that in the wider community rather than a catalyst for further outbreaks. 5-11 year olds are able to get the vaccine after 17 January 2022. As schools return between 31 January and 8 February 2022, the vaccination of 5-11 year olds will mitigate some of the potential risk that unvaccinated children will spread COVID-19.

Mitigations: Schools have a range of mitigations in place to reduce the risk of transmission at each level of the CPF, whilst the Ministry of Education is also reviewing its guidance in light of the threat posed by the Omicron variant.

Source: NZ Herald 07 January 2022 Ministry of Education 11 January 2022, 10.18 AM

Possible Future Rapid Antigen Test Shortage

New Zealand will likely need to continue to rely on PCR testing for a prospective Omicron outbreak given the global shortage of Rapid Antigen Testing kits (RATs). Increased worldwide demand for COVID-19 testing has led to global shortages of RATs, driven by the spread of the highly contagious Omicron variant. RAT's have been widely adopted overseas for personal, business and government use to rapidly screen for COVID-19. The speed at which Omicron spreads will likely place significant pressure on the PCR COVID-19 testing infrastructure in New Zealand, producing further delays in identification of positive cases across the community.

Mitigations: Work is underway to obtain RAT's, and allocate them appropriately.

Source: RNZ 9 January 2022; ABC News Australia 8 January 2022 1.36 PM; Stuff NZ 10 January 2022 8.33 PM.

Android Health Pass Issues

Some android phone users have reported their vaccine passes have disappeared from their smartphone home screen via the Google Pay application shortcut. While Google has advised that a fix was included in an update from 16 December, the issue continues to persist for some users.

Mitigations: The Ministry of Health has recommended that users screen shot or print out their vaccine pass to store as a back-up.

Source: Stuff NZ 15 December 2021

Previously Identified Risks That Remain Ongoing Include:

- Social cohesion challenges regarding COVID-19
- Lengthy PCR Test Result Turn-around Times
- Capacity to Treat Large Numbers of Severe COVID-19 Cases is Constrained
- MIQ Capacity is Limited
- Forgery and Improper Use of Vaccine Passes
- Some Confusion Around the CPF Traffic Light System
- COVID-19 Contact Tracing Capability is in Demand
- Concerning Pockets of Low Vaccination Coverage
- Hostility Directed at Customer-Facing Staff Enforcing Vaccine Passes
- Risks Associated With Cases Isolating Outside of a Managed Facility

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Health Factors

New Community COVID-19 Cases Decreasing, MIQ Cases Increasing

Although the total amount of COVID-19 cases and new community cases continues to decrease, cases detected in MIQ are increasing. It is likely that community and MIQ cases will increase over the next few weeks, following summer holiday gatherings, and particularly if there is an Omicron variant outbreak in the community.

The rolling 7-day average of new cases from 5-11 January 2022 has decreased to 28 cases per day compared to an average of 45 per day in the week of 29 December-4 January. Active COVID-19 cases in MIQ have been gradually increasing as a result of the rapid global spread of the Omicron variant. Cases in managed isolation have risen from 48 on 23 December, to 107 on 31 December, to 314 on 10 January.

Please note: In the figure below the new line of active COVID-19 case numbers in pink reflects a change to how the Ministry of Health classifies an active case, which are COVID-19 cases that are listed as 'not recovered' within the past 21 days. Those listed as 'not recovered' after 21 days are no longer considered active cases, resulting in the significantly lower numbers for this figure compared to prior weeks.

Source: Ministry of Health: 10 January 2022 1.30 PM

Hospitalisations

The number of COVID-19 related hospitalisations and ICU admissions continues to decrease. It is likely that these will increase over the coming weeks if there is community transmission of the Omicron variant. There has been an average of 39 people in hospital over the last week due to COVID-19 (down from 57 the week before). There are currently no COVID-19 patients in ICU or on ventilators.

Source: Ministry of Health: 10 January 2022 12.33 PM

ICU Beds and Ventilators

ICU capacity is under pressure from non-COVID-19 related patients, and will likely be constrained if there is an Omicron outbreak. Across all DHBs there are 99 ICU beds (38%) currently available. ICU capacity is particularly limited at Nelson Marlborough, South Canterbury, Whanganui and West Coast DHBs, with less than 3 beds currently available in each DHB. Available capacity at Auckland DHB is approximately 12 ICU beds and over 55 ventilators. There are 318 ventilators (83%) available across all DHBs.

Source: Ministry of Health: 10 January 2022 12.33 PM

Proportion of Contacts Contact Traced Increasing

The proportion of close-plus COVID-19 contacts that have been contact traced has increased significantly in the post-holiday period, likely as a result of low case numbers. However, contact tracing will likely be under significant strain in the event of an Omicron community outbreak. The Ministry of Health aims to have 80% of 'close plus' contacts in isolation/quarantine within 96 hours of exposure. Between 4 – 8 December, 80% of close plus contacts were in isolation or entered quarantine within this time. This was up from 14% in the period between 31 December and 4 January.

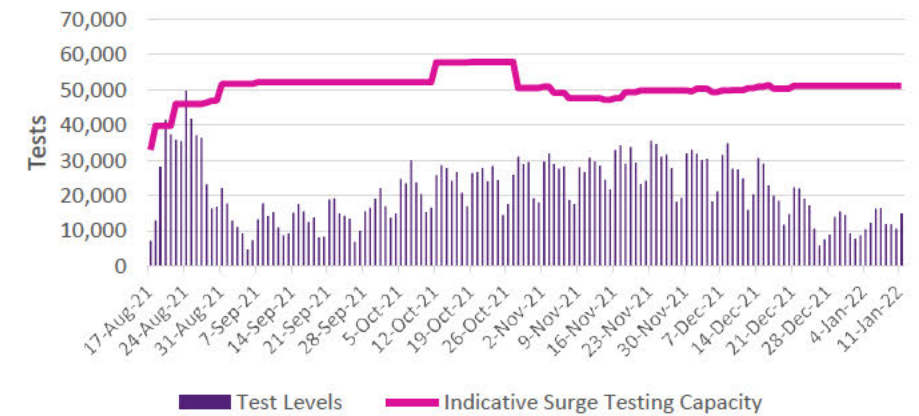
Source: Ministry of Health: 11 January 2022 1.30 PM

Testing Levels

Testing levels significantly decreased over the holiday period. This was likely due to people being unwilling to interrupt their holiday to be tested. Over the holiday break significant dips in testing levels were observed across all holiday dates, with the lowest rates on Christmas and Boxing Day. It is likely that testing levels will increase in the coming weeks as much of the public returns from summer holidays. During the week ending 4 January 2022, the 7-day rolling average decreased to 11,387 tests, compared to 21,812 for the week of 19 December. The rolling 7-day average increased slightly by 11 January, with 13,408 tests completed. In the event of community transmission of the Omicron variant, it is almost certain that testing demand will increase, placing further pressure on PCR testing capacity and test turn around times.

Source: Ministry of Health: 11 January 2022 8.30 AM

Testing Capacity vs Tests Administered



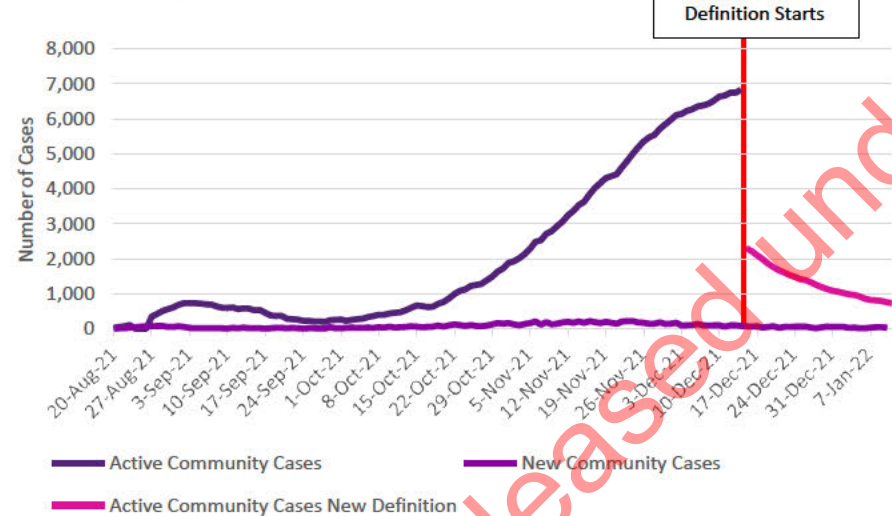
Vaccination Amongst Those Infected Since August

It is likely that COVID-19 infection and hospitalisation rates for those fully vaccinated will increase in the event of a community outbreak of Omicron. Preliminary evidence suggests that vaccinations are less effective in preventing infection from the Omicron variant, though it does reduce the likelihood of severe disease. Despite this, the higher volume of infections associated with the more contagious Omicron variant will likely reach a wider quantity of the public overall, and impact fully vaccinated vulnerable groups.

The majority of those infected with COVID-19 since August have been unvaccinated (49%). A further 20.5% of cases were ineligible for vaccination as they were under 12 years of age. 14.3% of cases had received one dose of the vaccine, and 14.3% were fully vaccinated. Though the majority of new COVID-19 hospitalisations as of 11 January are either unvaccinated or partially vaccinated (59%), approximately 37% of those hospitalised are fully vaccinated, compared to 22% in the week prior.

Source: Ministry of Health: 11 January 2022 1.30 PM; Ministry of Health: 5 January 2022 1.30 PM

Active COVID-19 Cases in Community



Released Under RMA Act 1982



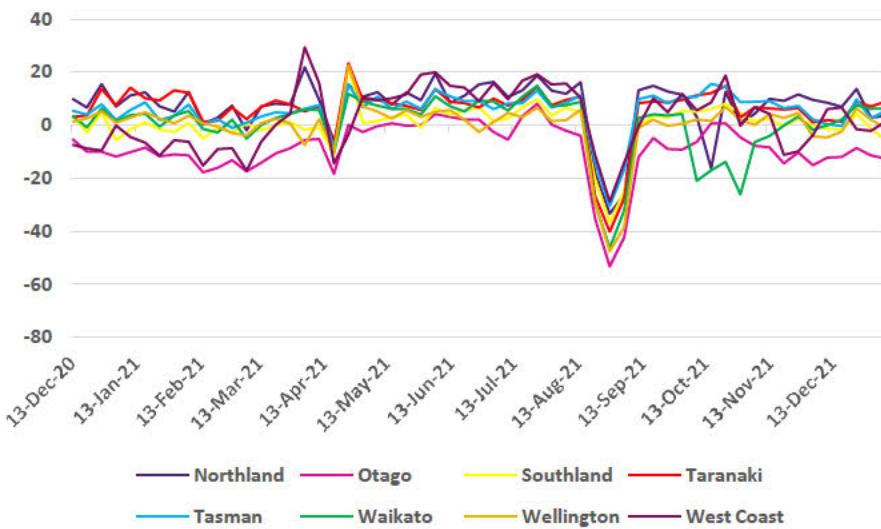
Effects on Economy and Society

Card Spend

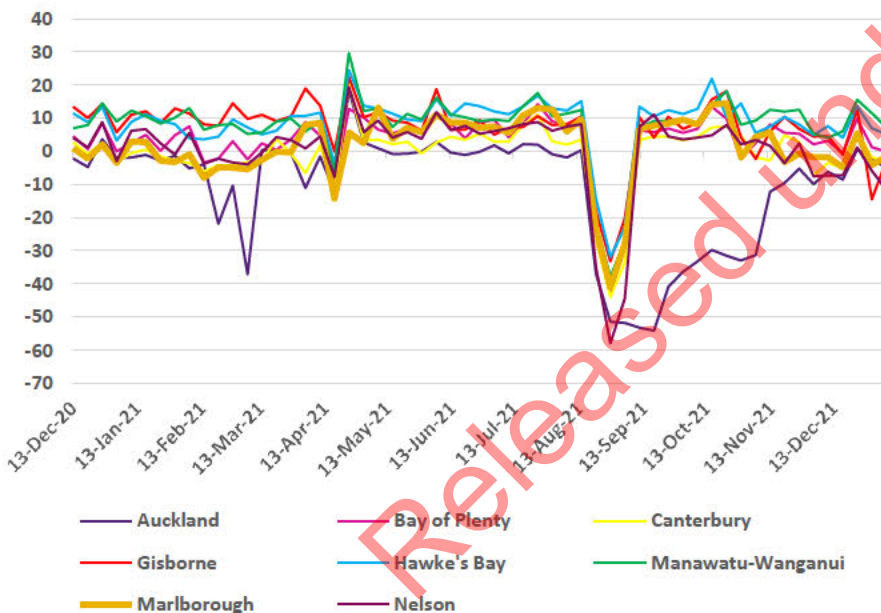
In the week ending 9 January 2022, the largest declines in card spend compared to the same week in 2020 were in Otago (-12.5%), Nelson (-11.6%) and Southland (-5.7%). The largest increases were in Taranaki (+9.0%), Manawatu-Wanganui (+7.2%) and Waikato (+6.3%). Card spend is likely to continue to recover toward pre-COVID levels, unless restrictions are tightened.

Source: MBIE, 11 January 2022

Card Spend vs Same Week in 2020 by Region



Card Spend vs Same Week in 2020 by Region



Impacts on at Risk Populations

Māori

Māori health leaders are meeting through the National Māori Pandemic Group – Te Rōpū Whakakaupapa Urutā - to evaluate best and worst case scenarios in preparation of the arrival of Omicron. The groups will consider the impact on essential services and on workers, such as care providers if case numbers rapidly increase, and how this will impact Māori communities specifically, particular in rural areas. The chair of the organisation noted that the key priorities in preparing Māori communities for Omicron included, communication, vaccinations including boosters and also the need to be able to deal with a potential reduction in health services such as elective surgery.

The rate of infection amongst Māori has been significantly higher than other communities during the Delta outbreak, and therefore it is likely that an Omicron outbreak would have a similarly disproportionate impact on Māori communities.

Source: Stuff 11 January 2022, 2:07 PM

Public Attitudes

Protests



Groundswell NZ is planning a 'Groundswell Gathering' mass event in February 2022 at Parliament. No exact date for the protest has been established.

Source: NZ Police: 11 January 11:22 AM

Sentiment Towards Restrictions

No update received at the time of reporting.

Source: DPMC: 11 January 2022, 4:06 PM

Operational Considerations

Self Isolation

There are currently 159 active cases self isolating, equating to 15.1% of all active cases. The definition of active cases recently has changed, and is now defined as cases identified within the last 21 days.

It is likely that the number of people self isolating will continue to increase as cases increase.

Source: Ministry of Health: 11 January 2022 1.17 PM

Quarantine

There are 75 community cases in quarantine, occupying 55 rooms. The total number of people in quarantine is 474, occupying 304 rooms. There are a 274 rooms available rooms remaining, with a further 60 under maintenance, being cleaned or repaired, there is also a small number of rooms available for overflow. There are also 12 close contacts occupying 5 rooms.

It is likely that that more cases and close contacts will have to quarantine at home given the limited room availability. It is also likely that the increase in cases at the border will continue to put pressure on the quarantine system which is currently being assessed as mentioned in the risks and issue page.

Cases in Quarantine

Site	Region	Total Community People in Quarantine	Total Community Rooms Occupied	Total People in Quarantine	Total Quarantine Rooms Occupied	Quarantine Rooms Allocated, in Maintenance, Cleaning or Repair	Available Quarantine Rooms	Total Quarantine Capacity
Jet Park	Auckland	1	1	241	156	14	28	202
Holiday Inn	Auckland	63	45	184	115	17	105	237
Amohia	Hamilton	11	9	16	8	22	59	89
Grand Mercure	Wellington	0	0	1	1	0	12	13
Commodore	Christchurch	0	0	7	6	5	4	15
Sudima	Christchurch	0	0	25	18	2	66	86
Total		75	55	474	304	60	274	642

Close Contacts in Quarantine

Site	Region	Total Close Contacts	Close Contacts Rooms Occupied	Close Contacts Rooms in Cleaning	Close Contact Rooms in Maintenance and Repair	Close Contact Rooms Available	Total Close Contact Capacity
Naumi	Auckland	5	5	5	3	2	34
Amohia	Hamilton	7	0	0	0	0	24
CRIQ	Christchurch	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total		12	5	5	3	2	58

Source: MBIE 11 January 2022, 7.56 AM

Workplace Notifications to WorkSafe

The rate of COVID-19 breaches received by Worksafe has been declining. This is likely as a result of businesses becoming more familiar with public health requirements under the CPF. There were 125 breaches reported to Worksafe in the week ending 9 January 2022, compared to 477 notifications in the prior reporting period between 9-15 December. There have been 5,744 total notifications of workplace breaches of COVID-19 rules since 18 August 2021.

Source: WorkSafe 11 January 2022 3.25 PM

Care in the Community

Ministry for Social Development are working to refine the data and this will be shared when available.

Source: Ministry for Social Development 11 January 2022 2.10 PM

Supply Chain Issues

No update received at the time of reporting.

Source: MOT: 11 January 2022, 4.06 PM

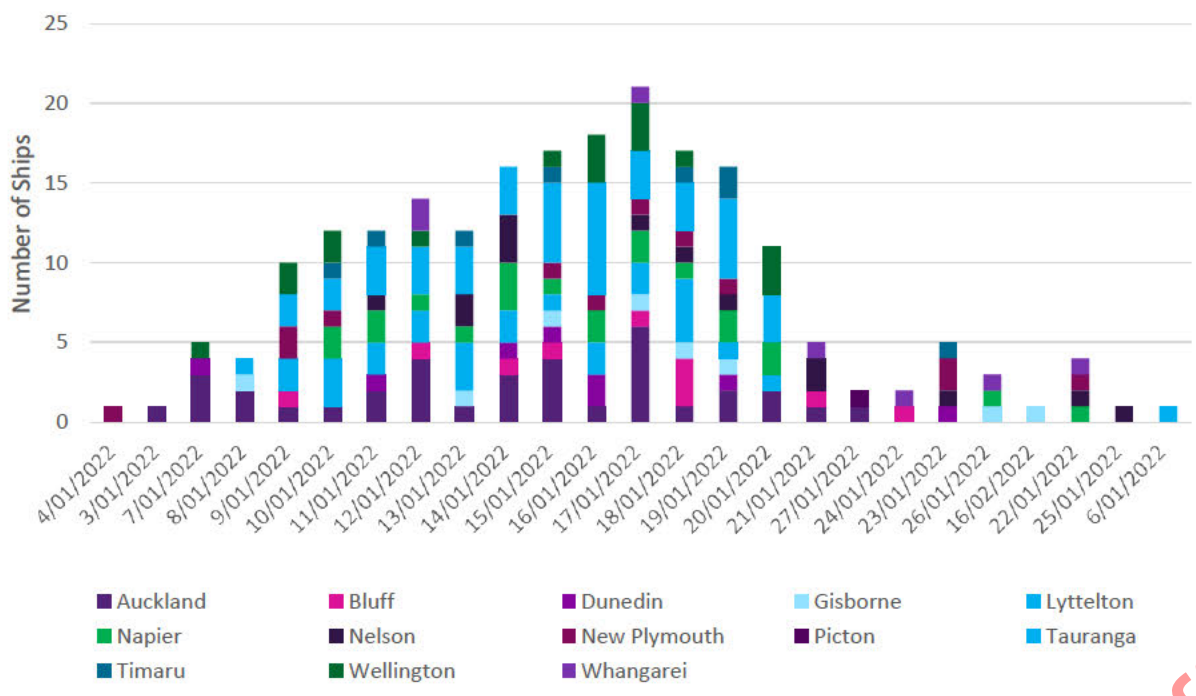
Compliance and Infringements

No update received at the time of reporting.

Source: NZ Police: 11 January 2022, 4.06 PM

Operational Considerations

Count of Ship Arrivals by Port and Arrival Date



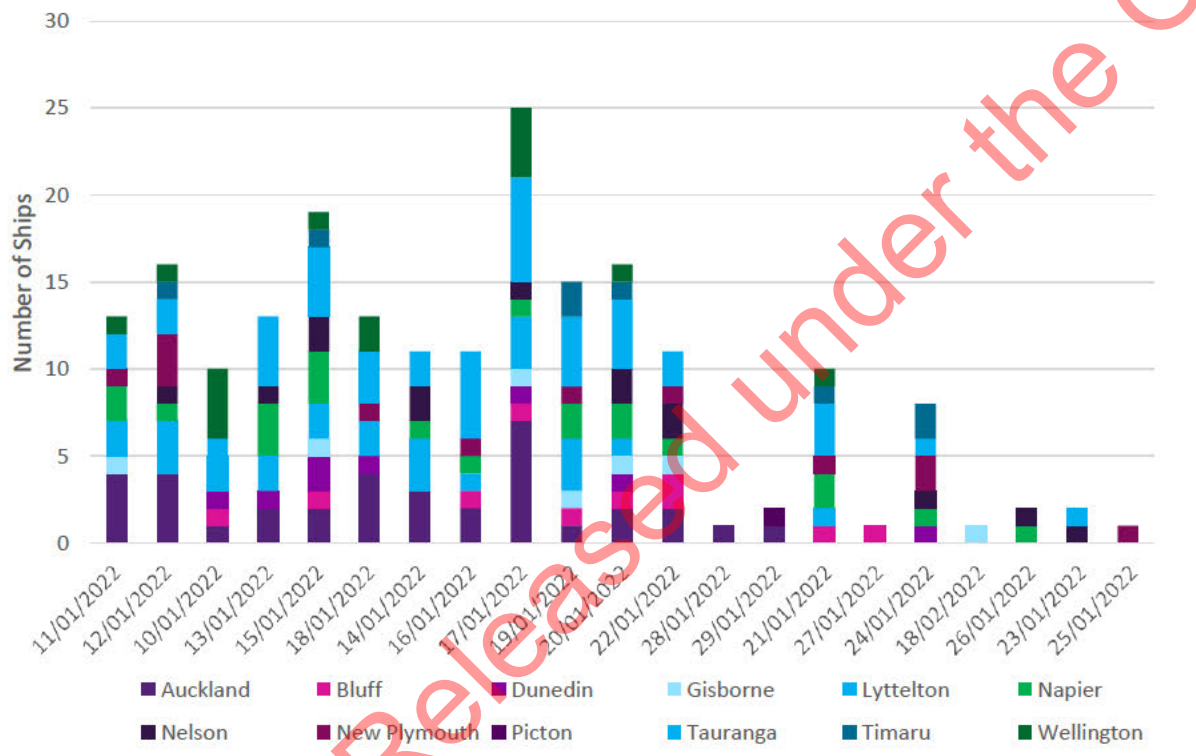
Shipping Arrivals and Departures

Over the next two weeks the ports of Tauranga, Auckland and Lyttelton will be the busiest ports in terms of arrivals and departures of ships. In terms of numbers of ships expected, Auckland is expected to have 36 arrivals, and 36 departures, Tauranga is expected to have 44 arrivals, and 44 departures, and Lyttelton is expected to have 25 arrivals and 25 departures.

If disruption to ports due to COVID-19 cases occurs, it is likely that this will cause disruption to supply chains as these are the main ports of entry of ships into New Zealand.

Source: NZ Customs 11 January 12.16 PM

Count of Ship Departures by Port and Departure Date



Released under the Official Information Act 1982

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Key Contacts

Purpose	Agency	Contact
Queries from Elected Officials	DPMC	electedofficials@dpmc.govt.nz s9(2)(a)
Business Queries	MBIE	AL4BusinessServices@mbie.govt.nz 0800 424 946
COVID-19 Health Advice	Healthline	0800 358 5453
To Report a Breach	Police	COVID-19 compliance Unite against COVID-19 (covid19.govt.nz)
Information/Apply for Wage Subsidy	MSD	https://www.workandincome.govt.nz/covid-19/wage-subsidy/index.html
Resurgence Payment Support	IRD	https://www.ird.govt.nz/covid-19/business-and-organisations/resurgence-support-payment
Exemption requests for Alert Level 4 measures <i>Note that if you have a general enquiry where someone is simply asking whether or not something is permitted and you are able to respond based on the Order, you can do so. If you are unclear at all, please forward to this new email.</i>	MoH	https://www.health.govt.nz/our-work/diseases-and-conditions/covid-19-novel-coronavirus/covid-19-health-advice-public/covid-19-travel-within-new-zealand
This report is produced by the Insights and Reporting Team in DPMC's COVID-19 Group. If you have any questions, concerns, or feedback, please do not hesitate to contact us.		COVID-19insights@dpmc.govt.nz