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PACIFIC (/INTERNATIONAL/PACIFIC-NEWS)

Auckland's Pasifika festival cancelled amid coronavirus fears

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COVID-19 timeline
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Auckland's two-day Pasifika festival, which was expected to draw at least 60,000 people to Western Springs park, has been cancelled because of concerns about the Covid-19 coronavirus.

All five cases of the virus in New Zealand have been in the Auckland region.



Photo: RNZ / Koroi Hawkins

More than 400 local and international artists were on the cards to perform at the festival, which was due to start tomorrow.

It is the second year in a row the festival has been cancelled, after last year's event was called off in the aftermath of the 15 March terrorist attack in Christchurch.

More than 700 students are expected to perform in Dallington, Christchurch.

Yesterday marked the fifth straight day of no further confirmed cases of the virus in New Zealand.

There were concerns earlier this week that it would be called off again, but it was given the all clear (<https://www.rnz.co.nz/news/political/411361/coronavirus-green-light-for-christchurch-memorial-service-pasifika-festival>) to go ahead on Tuesday, with authorities instead warning anyone who felt sick to stay home.

Auckland Mayor Phil Goff today said

(<https://www.rnz.co.nz/news/national/411636/auckland-mayor-phil-goff-on-covid-19-s-implications-for-the-city>) the decision to cancel Pasifika was made after discussions with the Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern and the Samoan High Commissioner.

Overnight, the Covid-19 Cabinet Committee met and considered the issue, and its advice was to cancel, based on concerns from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade and the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment.

"While the latest Ministry of Health advice is that New Zealand does not have a community outbreak of Covid-19 and the risk of a community outbreak remains low, Auckland Council and the Cabinet Committee's specific concerns are about the risk of the virus being transmitted to the Pacific Islands by attendees of the Festival," Goff said.

Watch the announcement here:

RNZ livestream



Meanwhile, the events co-ordinator of Canterbury Polyfest Melisa Stanley-Vanhorn has confirmed to RNZ Pacific that this weekend's event is still going ahead, despite Pasifika's cancellation.

