

Covid 19 coronavirus: Speaker confirms Parliament won't sit until April 28 amid alert level 4 lockdown

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Walls, J., 2020a

There are 40 new cases of coronavirus confirmed in New Zealand today. Director-General of Health Ashley Bloomfield told reporters there were also three new probable cases. There were 155 cases of confirmed and probable cases, and he said the daily tally would now include probable cases.



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The Government will move to adjourn Parliament for five weeks and will not sit again until April 28, regardless of New Zealand's Covid-19 alert status, Speaker Trevor Mallard says.

Tomorrow there will be a special sitting of the House – with a scaled-back number of MPs – to vote on the adjournment motion, which is expected to pass.

Mallard also announced that a new special committee, chaired by National leader Simon Bridges, has been set up and will have the power to interview those involved with the Government's Covid-19 response.

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The new committee, which will sit for four to five weeks, was agreed to by Parliament's business committee – a group of MPs from both sides of the House making decisions on many aspects of the proceedings of Parliament and its committees.

The new committee acts as a way for the Opposition to continue to hold the Government to account while Parliament is not sitting.

The Opposition would be able to "effectively interrogate" ministers or public servants on their actions around the pandemic, Mallard said.

That committee will have special powers to summon people to present to the committee and answer questions about Covid-19, as well as the power to request papers and reports relating to the response.

But Act leader David Seymour is not happy with the developments.

"New Zealanders have just faced the greatest peace-time loss of civil liberties in our history, and it is possible we may not have an election this year."

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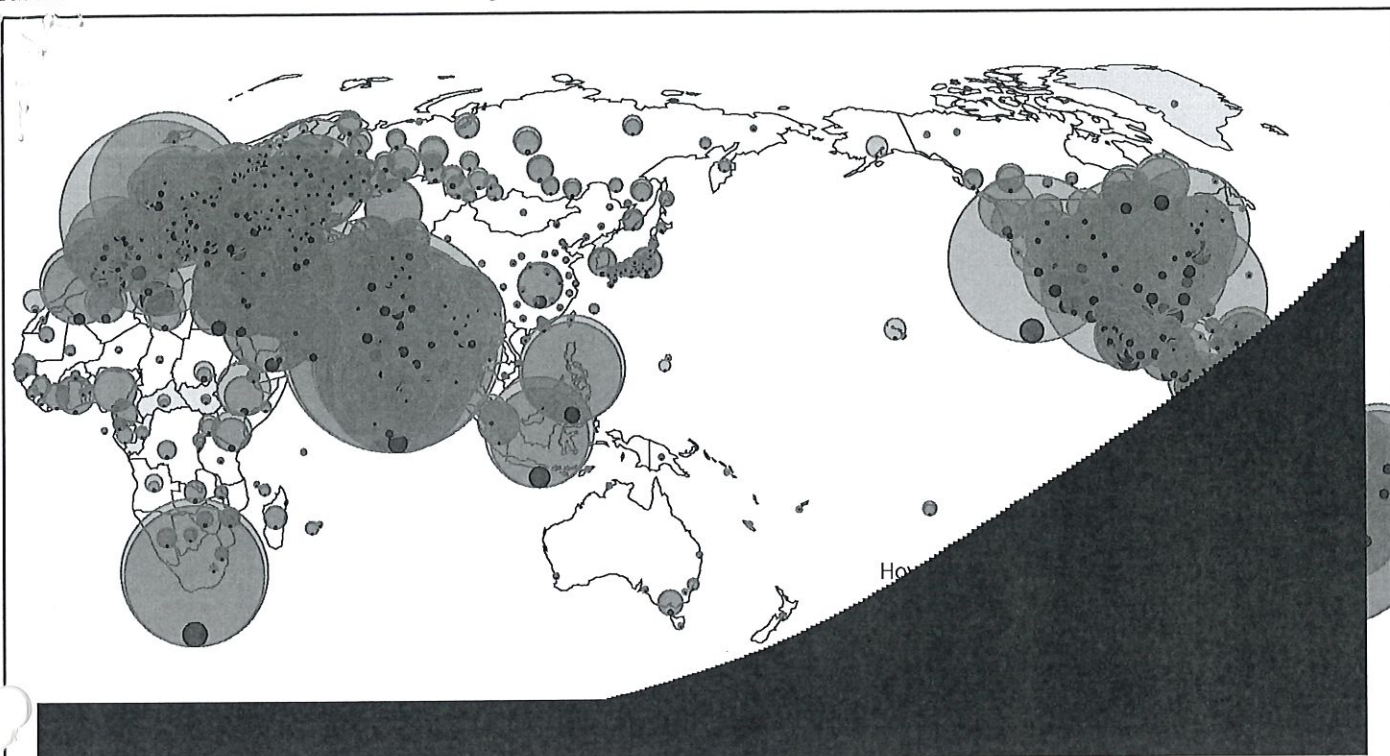
The new committee will be meeting remotely so its members won't all be in the same room.

Those meetings will be publicly broadcast, Mallard said.

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COVID-19 UPDATE



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27 Oct

44,351,007 confirmed cases globally

1,172,086 deaths

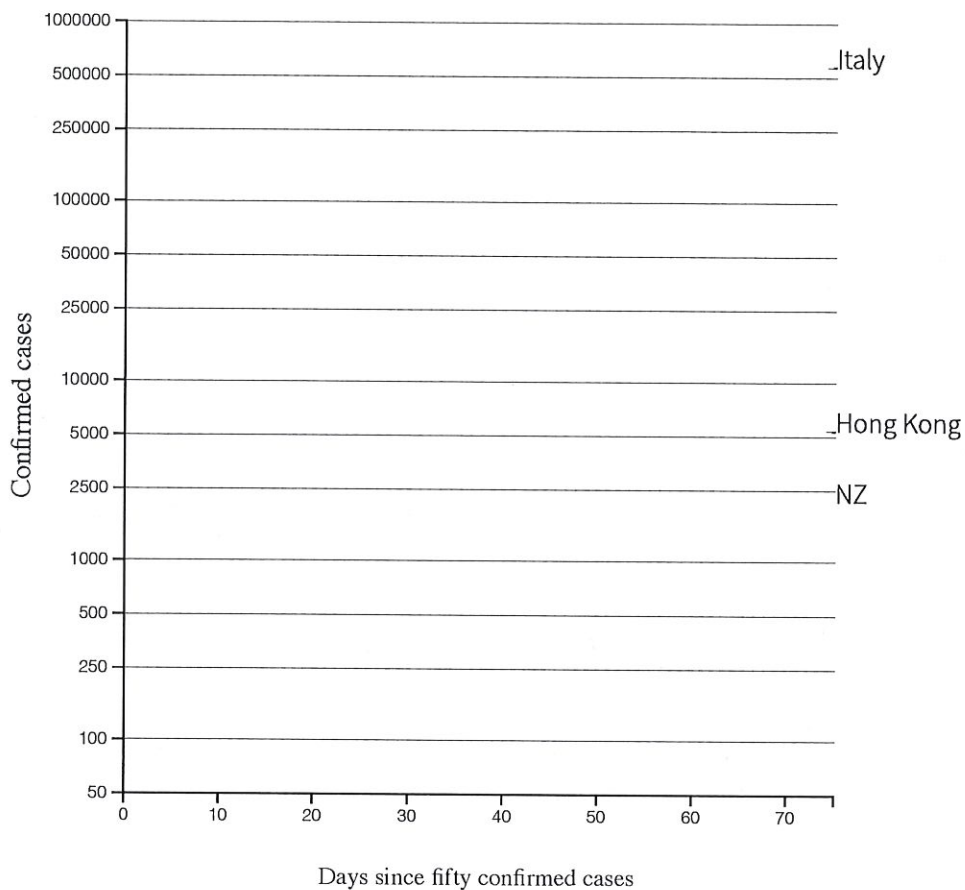
13,237,994 active cases

29,940,927 recovered

1949 New Zealand cases 1854 recovered 25 deaths

What will happen in New Zealand?

New Zealand's cases are primarily due to overseas travel, meaning the increase in cases seen here is still due to how many people are arriving with Covid-19, not how it is spreading in New Zealand.



Click on the labels on the chart above to compare and you will see more locations.

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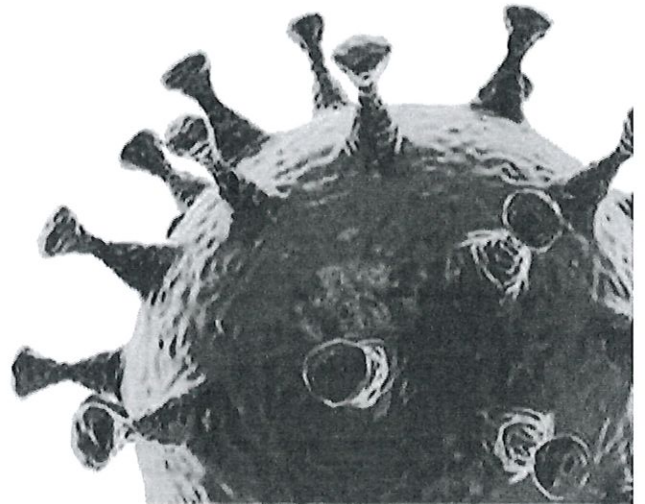
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"The witnesses will be interviewed remotely, but all of that will be available to the public."

He said there will be 11 MPs on the special committee, including five National MPs, an Act MP, three Labour MPs, one NZ First MP and one Green MP.

What you need to know

- New Zealand has activated its **national pandemic plan**, which is currently at the **"stamp it out"** phase.
- As with influenza, Covid-19 symptoms include **fever, cough, body aches, fatigue**, and sometimes **vomiting** and **diarrhoea**. Cases can range from mild to severe, and fatal.
- Early studies indicate the average number of people who catch the virus from an infected person could be between two and three. The rate for influenza is 1.3.
- In New Zealand, 10 to 20 per cent of people catch flu each year, but it results in only about 500 deaths.
- The most recent pandemic to affect New Zealand was the H1N1 (swine flu) in 2009, with 3,175 cases and 19 deaths.
- Both influenza and Covid-19 may be prevented with measures like frequent, thorough hand washing and staying home when sick, and limiting contact with people who are infected.
- People who suspect they have Covid-19 should call a dedicated healthline for free on **0800 358 5453** - and phone ahead before visiting a GP clinic or hospital.



irusFacts2

Although Seymour is on the committee he has called the decision to adjourn Parliament "misguided," adding that it was a "partial suspension of democracy".

Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern is poised to issue an epidemic notice and invoke the Epidemic Preparedness Act – legislation that gives the Government the ability to change almost any law at the stroke of a pen, Seymour said.

"The Government should deem democracy an essential service. If we need couriers, banks, and breakfast radio shows, then we also need democracy."

Mallard said Parliament will resume on April 28, even if the lockdown was extended from the current four weeks into the end of April.

He said there was no point having legislation back in Parliament because the legislative programme had been suspended.

"If Parliament is not sitting, legislation will not be progressed."