(MOH, 2020u)
[23 Sep 2020]

# 3 new cases of COVID-19 and 6 historical cases

## Media release

*23 September 2020*

Today there are three new cases of COVID-19 to report in New Zealand and for the first time six historical cases are being reported, made up of one confirmed case dating back to February and five probable historical cases connected to the case also dating back to February.

None of the new community cases are connected to the Auckland August community cluster.

Today's three new community cases are a family group linked to a previously reported Christchurch to Auckland chartered flight. They have been self-isolating over the last three days.

Of the six historical cases dating back to February, one of these is a confirmed historical case and there are five probable historical cases linked. Additional detail is provided below.

There are 37 people isolating in the Auckland quarantine facility from the community, which includes 17 people who have tested positive for COVID-19 and their household contacts.

Three people are in hospital with COVID-19 – one each at Auckland City, Middlemore and North Shore hospitals. All three patients are in isolation on a general ward.

Since August 11, our contact tracing team has identified 4,014 close contacts of cases, of which 4,006 have been contacted and are self-isolating or have completed self-isolation. We are in the process of contacting the rest.

There are two additional previously reported cases now considered to have recovered from COVID-19.

Our total number of active cases is 62; of those, 28 are imported cases in MIQ facilities, and 34 are community cases.

Our total number of confirmed cases of COVID-19 is 1,468.

Yesterday our laboratories processed 6,938 tests, bringing the total number of tests completed to date to 924,637.

# Contacts from Auckland flight

An update on the case of the man who left MIQ in Christchurch having returned negative tests for COVID-19 and then tested positive in Auckland.

There were 86 people on this charter flight. All have been contacted and are either in the process of being tested or have been tested. 63 have returned a negative test.

In tracing this man's history and how he became infected, we can update that one of two remaining cases from his earlier Delhi-Fiji flight has now been sequenced and been shown to be a close matc The second result is still pending.

We continue to investigate how his infection may have come about.

# Historical Waikato cluster

Today we are reporting six historical cases, including one confirmed historical case and five probable historical cases all linked, in the Waikato.

These cases present no risk to the public.

This infection occurred in late February following exposure to an infected person from Italy (another family member).

At the time the family member was visiting New Zealand, they became ill with symptoms consistent with COVID-19, and the wider household then also became ill.

At the time, they did not meet the case definition for testing for people with defined symptoms who had travelled from or transited through China. Italy had not at that point been identified as a country of concern. This meant the New Zealand household was not tested at the time.

Today's historical confirmed case (a man) recently developed a sore throat and sought testing. The weak positive result, combined with serology test results and case history, is consistent with an old infection.

At this stage, only the man will be counted as a confirmed case as he has returned a weak positive result on the PCR test. The other family members will be recorded as probable cases.

This would mean that the infected family member from Italy is effectively now the first case we are aware of in New Zealand, as they have reported having symptoms on arrival on 21 February, a week before our first reported case on 28 February.

Consequently, the other household cases would represent the first locally acquired cases of COVID-19 in New Zealand, given the onset of symptoms from 29 February for the confirmed case.

Further investigation will continue.

As part of the investigation, close contacts of this man during his recent mild illness have been tested as a precaution and have returned negative tests.

We have known that some people can return a positive PCR test long after they have recovered from the illness and are no longer infectious. Cases from this cluster would fit within one of the four categories outlined yesterday.

## NZ COVID Tracer

There are now 2,255,500 users registered on NZ COVID Tracer.

The app has recorded a total of 72,556,153 poster scans, and users have created 3,203,810 manual diary entries in NZ COVID Tracer.

**Media contact**
Jamie Charlotte Gendall
Phone 021 500 947

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