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Megan Woods on Covid-19 escape: 'Things have changed in terms of non-compliance'

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The attitudes of those in managed isolation and quarantine facilities has changed, with some people struggling to comply with the rules when they see an opportunity, Megan Woods says.

Stamford Plaza in Auckland. Photo: RNZ / Jean Bell

Woods, the minister in charge of managed isolation and quarantine, told *Checkpoint* at first, people were compliant with the rules when arriving in the country, not willing to escape from them.

Woods was speaking about the case of 32-year-old man who escaped from managed isolation at the Stamford Hotel last night and visited a supermarket before testing positive for Covid-19 today.

"Things have changed, even in the last week and a half, in terms of the range of incidents we are seeing, in terms of non-compliance.

"In the beginning, we had a very compliant population who came in ... and we didn't have people who were attempting to climb fences or slip through gaps when they saw an opportunity."

Asked why people's attitudes had changed, Woods said: "I don't have insight into each and every individual in those facilities but one thing I would observe is that they are probably looking out their windows and seeing a level 1 world operating when they are living in level 4, which is quite different."

Minister in charge of managed isolation, Megan Woods. Photo: RNZ / Dom Thomas

The man who escaped yesterday's action were "hugely disappointing", she said.

"We are asking those people coming home to make the necessary sacrifices to keep their fellow Kiwis safe. This man broke the law."

Woods said the reports she received said there was confusion over the man's identity due to fences being replaced.

"He used the opportunity of people around ... to slip through."

Woods said the security guards at the facilities were "not police, they can't arrest and detain. They can do the things that ... security guards can do."

Earlier today, minister of health Chris Hipkins revealed that the country's latest case of Covid-19 escaped from managed isolation last night (https://www.rnz.co.nz/news/national/420756/one-new-case-of-covid-19-in-nz-in-isolation-visited-auckland-supermarket).

Hipkins said the 32-year-old man, who arrived from India on 3 July, left his managed isolation last night to go to the Countdown supermarket on Victoria Street in central Auckland.

The man was outside the facility for 70 minutes.

Hipkins said after CCTV footage was viewed and the man was interviewed, the current assessment of the risk to the public was low.

Still, precautions are being taken - Countdown said the supermarket closed for cleaning at 8.15 this morning and will reopen tomorrow and Covid-19 testing facilities are on standby.

The man will be charged and faces up to six months in prison or a $4000 fine.

Air Commodore Darryn Webb, head of managed isolation and quarantine, said: "The actions of this man are completely unacceptable.

"We take any breach of the Covid-19 rules very seriously. Wilfully leaving our facilities will not be tolerated, and the appropriate action will be taken."