

ADVERTISEMENT

(Fyfe, J., 2020)

NZ news | News

Coronavirus: Police will enforce COVID-19 restrictions if necessary – Commissioner Mike Bush

James Fyfe

March 23, 2020 · 8:53am

Copy Link



Watch: Police commissioner Mike Bush spoke to The AM Show.

ADVERTISEMENT

Month of More

Buy a home this month and get a \$10k travel voucher. T&Cs apply.

[Learn more](#)

 **mikegreer**

ADVERTISE WITH STUFF

Police commissioner Mike Bush says anyone failing to comply with Government orders around COVID-19 will face the full weight of the law.

Bush will lead the Government's operational response to COVID-19. He says authorities have "numerous powers" to make sure people follow orders put in place to stem the spread of the virus.

The Government announced on Saturday a four-level alert system for the country. Currently, we are at level two - which suggests that COVID-19 is contained, but that risk of community transmission is growing.

If the level is raised to four - the highest level - educational facilities and non-essential businesses would be closed, supplies rationed, travel severely limited and people would need to stay at home.

Stuff Daily

Get NZ's biggest news delivered via
email each morning

Start now

This level would be activated if COVID-19 is not contained at a national or local level, and Bush said police would not hesitate to enforce the restrictions.

"We have numerous powers," Bush told The Am Show on Monday. "We have powers under the Health Act, we may in fact have powers under the Civil Defence Emergency Act. But we also have our power under the Summary Offences Act."

ADVERTISEMENT

ADVERTISE WITH STUFF

"So if we're asking people to comply there is authority we can use. We hope not to use it, but we will," Bush said.

He said police would be "out there being very visible" in the coming weeks or months.

"The way I put it is, you're better to stay on the comfort of your own couch of your own home than be cooling yourself on a very cool bench in a police cell."

Although police were willing to go to great lengths to enforce restrictions, Bush said the "majority of New Zealanders are already doing what needs to be done to take care of themselves, to take care of others".

"But what I can say is that if people don't do as they're directed, we'll be out there and we'll be ensuring that people are complying - because they need to be. This is about saving lives."

Normal police work - such as breath testing - would also continue while efforts were focused on making sure people complied with COVID-19 restrictions, he said.

Bush's new role heading the operational response comes as the country confirmed its 66th COVID-19 case on Sunday.

Although community transmission has not yet been proven, two cases have yet to be linked to overseas travel, meaning it is possible.

Epidemiologist Sir David Skegg, who has worked as a consultant to the World Health Organization and is a former vice-chancellor of the University of Otago, told Newshub on Monday the [likelihood of community transmission](#) needs to be taken seriously.

"People have downplayed the likelihood of community transmission, he said. "I think it's almost certain that has been occurring. I can't see why it wouldn't

- the virus will behave here the same way it has in other countries."

More testing needed

Bush said the aim of the operational arm of the Government's response is about "making sure all that needs to be done is being done".

"It's really about joining up the entire public sector who are absolutely focused on getting in front of this to keep New Zealand and New Zealanders well, keep them safe and ensure the country stays sustainable."

The role will also aim to bring public service, the private sector and the community together "to absolutely battle this so New Zealand can come out of this in the best possible shape".

As well as enforcing rules so people don't spread the virus, Bush said the Government was focused on ramping up testing.

Last week, Dr Ashley Bloomfield, Director-General of Health said the Ministry of Health had the capacity to carry out 1500 tests a day.

Bush said that number had to come up, adding that at least 100,000 test kits from China had been ordered and paid for on Friday.

"One of our number-one priorities is that we step up the number of tests that are being done," he said.

Bush praised the "outstanding job" Dr Bloomfield and his team had done so far in dealing with the outbreak.

"This is about how we get in behind them and support them and take it right across the public service to ensure that our approach and everything we do gets in front of this."

With many experts warning that it's a question of when not if community transmission occurs here, there have been calls for the Government to raise its alert level to four immediately.

In an [open letter to Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern](#), the Teaching Council of Aotearoa New Zealand said schools needed to be shut now in order to keep students and staff safe.

A [petition was also launched](#) over the weekend by health workers calling for the alert level to be raised to four. That petition was met with outrage from the New Zealand Nurses Organisation, however, who called it "absolutely disappointing" and said it was "very likely" to cause panic.

Worldwide there have been almost 330,000 confirmed cases of COVID-19, with the death toll standing at over 14,000.

- Newshub

 [Copy Link](#)

[Send us a news tip](#)

Quick question...

Did this story inform, educate or inspire you? Please support us.

[Contribute](#)



Paid Content