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## **PM DEFENDS AUCKLAND LOCKDOWN**

With criticism directed at her from the New York Times, the Daily Telegraph and any number of social media commentators, Ardern yesterday defended her relaxation of Auckland's level Three lockdown.

“Even with these changes, Auckland will continue to have among the toughest restrictions of anywhere in the world,” she said.

And though she says we are in transition out of the elimination strategy, she also says nothing has changed.

“So despite the fact that we have not yet reached zero, it changes nothing about the way we are treating COVID right now. We still contact to trace everyone; we genome sequence; we source and investigate. Everything we are doing today is the same as we were doing yesterday and the same as day one of the outbreak,” she said.

## **VACCINE PASSPORTS**

Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern says the Government will introduce Vaccine Certificates next month, which will be particularly useful for large events like summer music festivals. They will not be needed for medical care or in supermarkets.

“The question that everyone will rightly have is how widely will these be applied? That is, work that ministers and agencies are currently undertaking and will form the basis of a new framework for us to use as a nation once we have higher vaccination rates,” she said.

“We’re consulting on this framework now, and I'll share more detail in the coming weeks.

“Here are a few points I can share now. We will use them as a tool to lessen the

risk and what are currently considered high-risk settings, including large scale events. We are also consulting on the use and places like hospitality. There are areas we will not apply them so that people are not restricted from accessing things like essential health services or, for instance, food from the supermarket. “The certificate will take the form of a physical document that you can download and print or carry in digital form on your phone, and finally will release the detail of the framework in advance of it taking effect so people will have time to prepare. “

### **MONGREL MOB RUNNING VACCINE CAMPAIGN**

In a media statement last night, **Sonny Fatupaito, Ariki, Mongrel Mob Kingdom** says indigenous health experts have highlighted that gang communities are high risk and need tailored intervention to minimise the spread of Covid-19 into wider communities.

As part of supporting the Government's Covid Delta Strategy, the Mongrel Mob Kingdom have been liaising with the Northern Region Health Coordination Centre (NRHCC), Auckland Regional Public Health Service (ARPHS), and the NZ Police to assist in reaching hard to reach communities within gang chapters and associated whanau.

This work initially started with a cluster at the Assembly of God Church in Manukau, then extended to a Mongrel Mob Kingdom Chapter based in Auckland. This required immediate intervention from the senior leadership in the Waikato Kingdom, and this onsite intervention ensured compliance and welfare assistance was provided as needed. The Kingdom has collaborated closely with providers South Seas Healthcare and The Cause Collective based in South Auckland. He says A request for assistance from the Crisis Management Team in South Auckland was made to him to facilitate the process of members and their whanau being tested. He was given an exemption to cross the Auckland boundary, to complete this essential work, this travel was conducted under strict Covid-19 protocols enforced by Health Authorities and the Police.

The high level of risk is far from over; the Mongrel Mob Kingdom will be facilitating further educational health programs in the Waikato. To this end, a Covid-19 Education Workshop on 16 October will be held in Hopuhopu, with indigenous health experts, Dr Rawiri McKree Jansen from Te Ropu Whakakaupapa Uruta

(National Māori Pandemic Group) and Associate Professor, Collin Tukuitonga from the Public Health department at the University of Auckland.

## **NEW HOMEOWNERSHIP POLICY**

Housing Minister Megan Woods says the Government is creating more opportunities for individuals, families and whānau to purchase their own homes through the Progressive Home Ownership (PHO) Fund.

“A core belief of this Government is that everyone deserves a warm, dry and secure home, whether they own or rent,” says Housing Minister Megan Woods.

“Progressive Home Ownership enables people who might otherwise never have a chance to own their own home. Fifty-three families are now living in these homes since the programme's launch last year, with a further 113 contracted and on the journey to homeownership. These changes mean even more people will have that opportunity,” Megan Woods said.

Today, Kāinga Ora launched a new shared-ownership product, First Home Partner, through which Kāinga Ora will take an equity share in a property to assist first home buyers who can service a mortgage but need help raising their deposit. “This phase of the PHO scheme lends directly to households who don't require the kind of intensive support to manage their finances as offered through the Provider pathway,” Megan Woods said.

Habitat for Humanity and Queenstown Lakes Community Housing Trust will also build 50 more homes around the country for progressive homeownership after Te Tūāpapa Kura Kāinga – Ministry of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) approved their loans.

## **BUSINESS CONFIDENCE WEAKENS**

The latest NZIER *Quarterly Survey of Business Opinion* (QSBO) shows a weakening in business confidence in the September quarter, despite demand in firms' own business holding up.

A net 8 per cent of businesses expect a deterioration in general economic conditions over the coming months – a turnaround from the net 9 per cent expecting an improvement in the previous quarter. This weakening in sentiment was despite demand remaining solid, with a net 29 per cent of businesses

reporting an increase in their own trading activity in the September quarter. This QSBO survey was taken over the period 2 August to 27 September 2021. Hence, it captures some of the impacts from the latest COVID-19 community transmission and lockdown on businesses in New Zealand.

The building sector has gone from being the most optimistic to once again the most pessimistic of the sectors surveyed, with a net 43 per cent of building sector firms expecting a deterioration in general economic conditions ahead. Confidence in the building sector weakened despite continued solid demand, particularly when it comes to the pipeline of Government construction work. Capacity pressures remain very acute in the building sector, but building sector firms are finding it easier to pass on higher costs by raising prices.

Across the other sectors, the manufacturing sector is also feeling downbeat despite solid demand. Retailers report some easing in demand, costs and the pricing environment. Services sector firms are also feeling downbeat despite stronger demand.

Uncertainty over how the latest COVID-19 community outbreak will evolve has led to more caution amongst businesses towards investment in buildings, and plant and machinery. However, firms are feeling more positive about increasing headcount in the next quarter, particularly amongst retailers. This suggests that businesses are planning for a rebound in demand when alert level restrictions are relaxed.

Despite capacity pressures becoming more acute, businesses report a softening in costs and pricing in the September quarter. Firms report the shortage of skilled labour becoming even more acute, but there was a slight easing in the shortage of unskilled labour. Nonetheless, these developments suggest that while supply-side constraints are likely to keep inflation elevated, overall, there should be a moderation in inflation pressures over the coming year.

Aotearoa New Zealand's leading environmental groups have collaborated to provide a joint submission on the Ministry for the Environment's Freshwater Farm Plan consultation.

## **ENVIRONMENTAL GROUPS AGREE ON FARM PLANS**

the Ministry for the Environment has invited comments on how Freshwater Farm

Plans should evolve in the implementation phase of the freshwater reforms. Greenpeace Aotearoa, the Environmental Defence Society, Forest & Bird, New Zealand Fish & Game and Choose Clean Water have joined forces to produce an agreed way forward.

Because these groups have joined forces, it's expected that the submission will have considerable influence on the outcome.

Freshwater Farm Plans are a potentially useful and constructive way to improve understanding of how the Essential Freshwater reforms will lead to improved on-farm practices.

The submission sets out how the Farm Plan regulations should be formulated. In particular, it calls for Farm Plan Certifiers and Auditors to be run out of regional councils in order to avoid fragmentation of responsibilities and for there to be a clear line-of-sight from freshwater plan rules to catchments and on to individual farm properties.

Keeping the new system simple, clear and transparent is vital to make clear the improvements that will be needed to freshwater quality over time.

### **KAIKOURA PAUA FISHERY TO RE-OPEN**

Kaikōura's pāua fishery, which has been closed since the November 2016 earthquakes disrupted local seabeds, is to reopen following a community-led rebuild.

The fishery will initially reopen for three months from 1 December and be closely monitored, Oceans and Fisheries Minister David Parker said.

### **MAORI TRUSTEE REAPPOINTED**

Minister for Māori Development Willie Jackson today announced the reappointment of Dr Charlotte Severne as Māori Trustee for Te Tumu Paeroa for a term of five years. The Ngāti Tūwharetoa, Ngāi Tūhoe descendant, is a respected scholar holding a PhD specialising in geology from the University of Auckland and was originally appointed in 2018 for a three-year term. Dr Severne is the first woman to lead the organisation.



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