

4 October 2021

To Club Secretaries
CC Regions

Covid 19- Advisory No 19

The outbreak, over the weekend, of Covid in Raglan and Hamilton plus continued cases in Auckland, shattered any immediate hope of coming down the Alert Levels. As just announced Auckland will remain at Alert Level 3 but with the ability from 11.59pm on 5 October to meet family members (limited to 10) outside and only outside. The relaxation for Auckland does not apply to the Waikato who remain at the full Alert Level 3 restriction. The rest of the Country will remain at Alert Level 2.

The Government has laid out a roadmap for the future. That roadmap focuses on getting people fully vaccinated. It is clear the Government and public health require more people to be vaccinated before there is a change in Alert Levels. An increase in the number vaccinated means Government will have more confidence to make changes away from the blunt instrument of Alert Levels and lockdowns. The move from an elimination strategy is possible because we have a vaccine at our disposal, plus continued use of public health initiatives (QR codes, testing, face masks, sanitizing).

Also, there is now an open discussion about a vaccine passport that will allow greater freedom for those who are fully vaccinated. More about a vaccine passport is expected next week. In the meantime, it is more of the same. Some bridge but not enough.

One thing about Covid is that we have all become public health experts. Our focus over the last 18+ months has been the welfare of players. We have relied on Government policy to direct us on the assumption the Government has information at hand that we the general population do not. In other words, they are making reasoned and informed decisions. That was the basis of our last advisory, plus of course the need to consider issues around privacy and Bill of Rights. Notwithstanding and in anticipation of what we might hear next week, we are keen to further the discussion on requiring players to be vaccinated. It is obvious there is a significant difference between public health measures and measures to protect an individual. Requiring full vaccination for the community will reduce the viral load in the community and thereby reduce the burden on health services. It is the burden on the health service that drives changes to Alert Levels and imposition of lockdowns. A reduced viral load in the community will reduce the likelihood of individuals picking up the virus but will not eliminate it. Pleasingly of the current outbreak only 3% of cases involve people who were fully vaccinated.

In the meantime, for us to seriously think about a voluntary requirement to be vaccinated could be a positive step. It would demonstrate a very responsible approach to a high-risk sector of the community. What would be interesting to know is how many players are vaccinated (one or two doses). It would not surprise me to learn that the vaccination rate of players is >90+%. If the Government does move on vaccination passports (which is now most likely) it would be nice to be at the forefront. Good for players and good for the game. To aid future decision making and to make implementation as simple as possible it would be nice to know the number of players vaccinated.

This is where we need your help. **Can you undertake a simple survey of your members and ask if they are vaccinated- one or two jabs. Please relay your findings to the secretary@nzbridge.co.nz.** We appreciate some players might be reluctant to disclose personal information which is fine. Also, as mentioned last week there might be an opportunity for clubs to assist players who want some help. Without putting pressure on you, if we could have something back in the next 10 days that would help.

Thanking you in advance.

Cheers Allan