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MANAGING COVID-19OMICRON VARIANT

Purpose

This Advisory informs operators about what we are seeing from overseas experience with the Covid-19 pandemic and in particular Omicron, with the intention we can advise you on how to make your business and relationship with customers more resilient.

Omicron

The World Health Organisation classify Omicron as a Covid-19 variant of concern because compared to the Delta variant:

- Omicron is more transmissible
- Omicron may cause similar symptoms, however, more data are required to confirm this
- Omicron has similar hospitalisation rates, however more information is required to determine disease severity

More information is [here](#)

Overseas experience

Across the Tasman in Australia there are reported food shortages due to supply-side problems and these are occurring almost nationally. As Omicron infections surge in every state apart from Western Australia, supply chains are being crippled by the sheer number of transport, distribution and shop workers now sick or required to isolate. The major problem now is in transport and distribution with the Transport Workers' Union saying a [third to half of Australia's truck drivers](#) are off work.

Prevention strategy

- Overseas experience to date indicates that a booster dose of the Pfizer vaccine enhances protection.
- It is also important to continue to protect ourselves and our whānau and stop the transmission of the disease by following health habits such as:

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- Keep indoor rooms well ventilated
- Wearing masks and face coverings is one way of keeping yourself safe and protecting others from Covid-19, especially when physical distancing is not possible. Wear masks in confined or crowded environments
- Physical distancing of 2 metres where possible
- Remind your people if they feel unwell or show any symptoms, they must stay home, call Healthline and get a Covid-19 test
- Be aware of your staff's Covid-19 vaccination status and consider a testing regime
- Keep a record of where your staff have been or have them scan in wherever they go using the Covid Tracer app and turn Bluetooth on phones so people can be contacted if they have been near a case.

Mitigation: Review your Pandemic Plan and Business Continuity Plan and discuss these with your key customers

- Do you have systems in place to ensure good contact tracing, and if necessary, can you swiftly manage isolation of cases and contacts?
- How will you maintain your essential services or activities with high numbers of staff absence over an extended period?
- What essential goods and services do you rely on and how you will manage any disruptions to supply?
- How can you implement alternative work practices in your workplace (e.g., social distancing measures, remote working capability)?
- What services will need additional support to meet a surge in demand (e.g., IT support services)?
- Where the size of your business makes sense, have you considered splitting your staff into two or more teams that are kept segregated so if members of one team get sick, the other team/s are less likely to be impacted?
- Consider potential sub-contractor options.
- Consider flexible work hours.
- Consider the cost impacts related to managing the risk.
- Consider sick leave implications.

Transporting New Zealand action

Transporting New Zealand will be asking the Government for its Omicron plan to assist business planning – we believe they are still working on it. We want to see rapid antigen testing readily available and be clear on what isolation periods will be required by the New Zealand Government – in Australia, it is seven days from the positive test result that people need to home isolate.

We need clarity on how the traffic light system will work, and whether or not the Government

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will plan lockdowns when case numbers increase as they have overseas at rates of thousands per day.

Our advice is that Omicron is coming any day, we can learn from the Australian experiences so far, and hopefully be as prepared as possible.

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