

BUSINESS | Economy

# Covid 19 coronavirus: Waiheke Island ready to burst its bubble for visitors

11 May, 2020 5:00am

5 minutes to read

PM Jacinda Ardern says New Zealand can take heart from there being no new coronavirus cases today. But she says it reflects the success of the lockdown rather than actions during level three.

By: **Bernard Orsman**

Super City reporter, NZ Herald.

bernard.orsman@nzherald.co.nz @BernardOrsman

---

Waiheke Island is looking forward to welcoming visitors to its bubble when travel restrictions end with the highly anticipated move to level 2.

With the picturesque Hauraki Gulf island off limits to visitors and boaties for six weeks, the island's tourism-driven economy has taken a huge hit and been set back worse than most other economies, Local Board chairwoman Cath Handley says.

---

**SIGN UP TO OUR COVID-19 NEWSLETTER.  
SIGN IN OR REGISTER, THEN SELECT TOP NEWS STORIES**

---

"Many people have said it has been like the old Waiheke, but on the other hand we have missed that vibrancy of our local market on a Saturday and having our favourite coffee places.

"It has been lovely and we have got the most beautiful environment. Gosh we have been lucky ... most of us are within walking distance of a beach. That is just so nice," Handley said.

She said Waiheke had not recorded a single case of Covid-19 which made some people anxious but said the economy desperately needed visitors to get the economy moving.



Ferries will start running to and from Waiheke for visitors under level 2. Photo / Jason Oxenham

Once Fullers resumes ferry services for visitors under level 2 - ferry services to the island have been restricted to essential workers and to move essential goods - Handley believes there will be a surge of stir-crazy Aucklanders and others visiting the island.

This will be a reversal of residents vigilantly reporting cases of day trippers and boaties flouting the rules and travelling to the island during lockdown, and Waiheke winemaker and socialite Stephen White being cautioned by police to end his "harvesting" party for grape pickers.

Tim Pickering, owner and chef at Fenice restaurant and bar in Oneroa, said there was a little bit of conservatism among locals about keeping people out but he was really looking forward to level 2 and would "100 per cent" be re-opening for visitors.

He said the wineries and about 30 restaurants were the biggest businesses and employers on the island, with 15 to more than 100 staff each.

Under level 4, Pickering said business was zero and under level 3 it was 20 per cent to 30 per cent of regular business and not sustainable. By taking the wage subsidy he has kept all his staff on and is confident it will stay that way after the subsidy ends.

## Related articles:

NEW ZEALAND

### **Former TV journalist, Labour candidate denies Waiheke lockdown breach**

4 May, 2020 6:11am  
2 minutes to read

NEW ZEALAND

### **Oh baby! Girl born on Waiheke ferry**

26 Apr, 2020 9:48am  
2 minutes to read

### **Waiheke Island homes an exercise in desire**

25 Apr, 2020 6:01am  
Quick Read

- Covid19.govt.nz: The Government's official Covid-19 advisory website

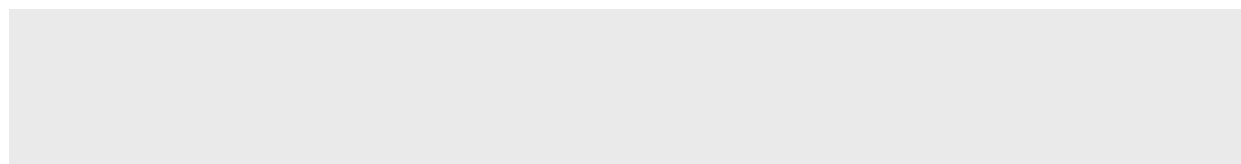
"The thing about Waiheke and us is a lot of staff are foreigners and on sponsored visas so that means you have to guarantee them a job and guarantee them hours," he said.

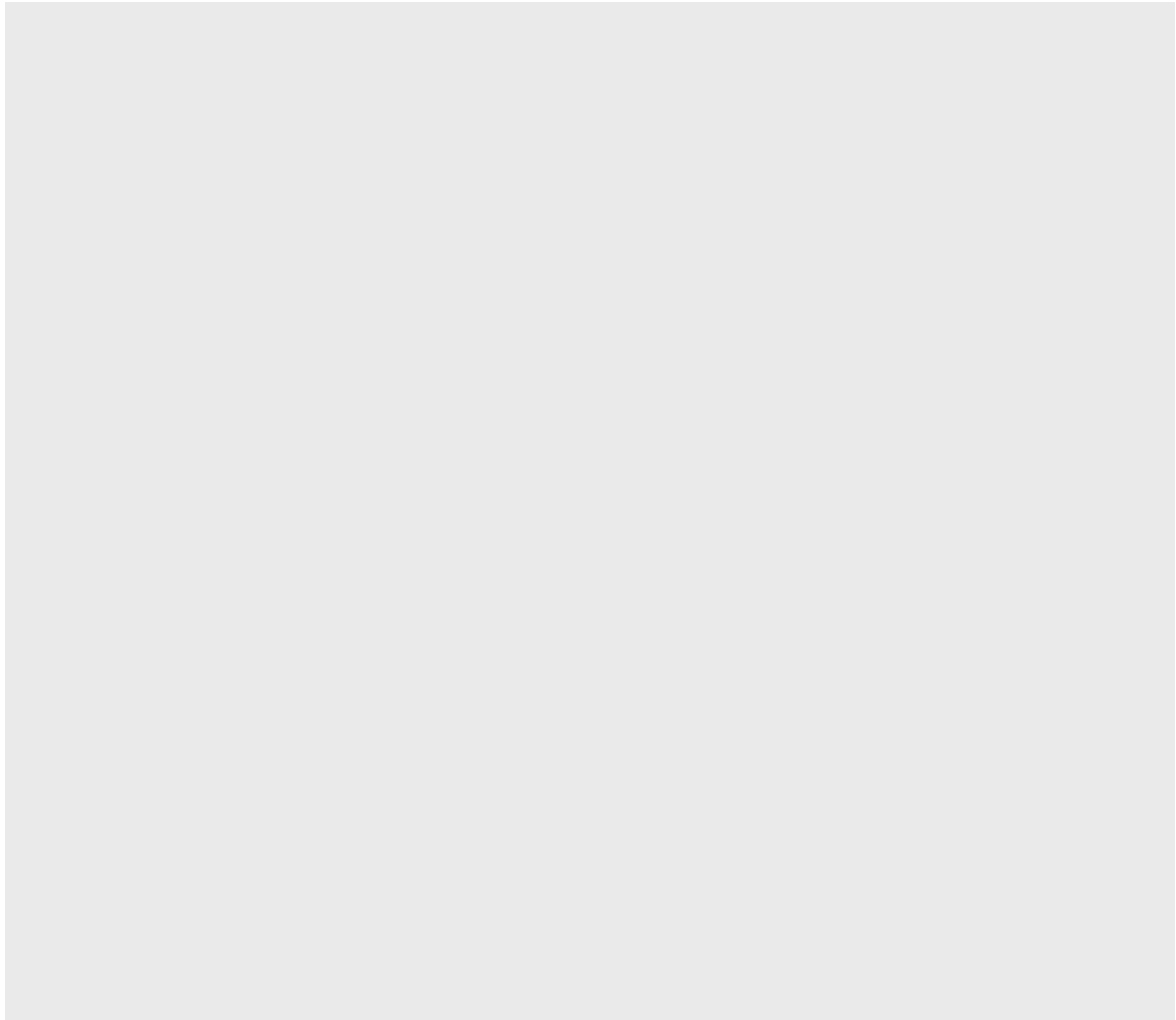
Mudbrick's Nick Jones said the lockdown had been a "weird, weird thing" after being shut for the first time since 1992 when he and his partner Robyn bought a lifestyle block on the island where they planted a vineyard and opened a restaurant.

Not only had the restaurant shut, but the popular wedding venue had lost about 30 to 40 bookings, most of which had been postponed as far out as 2022, he said.

Nick Jones said the return of regional travel was very good news for Waiheke because, along with places like Queenstown, it would attract holidaymakers at level 2.

Robyn Jones said Mudbrick had already received bookings from people who wanted to come and feel safe, and Mudbrick was in the lucky position of having an outdoor bar and bistro for social distancing in addition to an indoor restaurant.





Mudbrick Restaurant and Vineyard has had to postpone many weddings. Photo / File

Like Fenice, Nick Jones said Mudbrick had taken the wage subsidy and not laid off any staff, saying the business was operating with 111 staff going into lockdown, although those numbers were seasonal and would reduce heading into winter and level 2.

Kim Rae, who runs Stay Waiheke with about 100 holiday homes on its books, said business had been terrible after mass cancellations and just a handful of overseas visitors extending their stay through the lockdown.

"The timing had not been the worst it could be but not the best it could be because we lost all of our Easter sales and Easter is the second-busiest time on Waiheke after New Year," she said.

Rae said her goal now was not about making money but getting people to the island to spend money and get the economy going again, saying as soon as the level 2 guidelines came out she emailed homeowners about incentives for longer stays.

"We want people to come for longer, we want to give them free nights, but we want them to go to all the vineyards and restaurants," she said.

# PLEASE SUPPORT NEW ZEALAND JOURNALISM

For more than 150 years, the NZ Herald has brought you the stories that matter and kept the powerful accountable. Now, more than ever, we need your help

**TRUSTWORTHY • INSIGHTFUL • IMPORTANT • EXCLUSIVE**

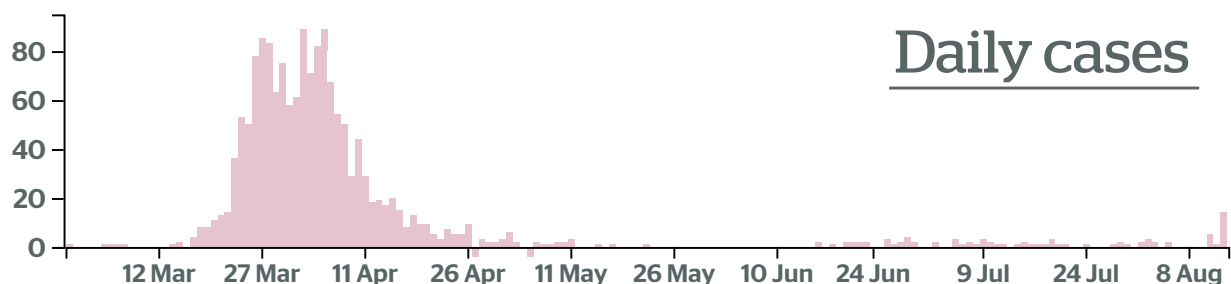


**Sign up to NZ Herald Premium** for the very best New Zealand journalism

Waiheke Island Tourism Forum chairwoman Christina Hyde said a marketing campaign was being prepared to attract visitors from Auckland, the Bay of Plenty and Waikato once level 2 is in place.

She said the tourism industry on the island had been deadly quiet, saying the campaign would offer package deals that include accommodation, ferry travel, activities and restaurant deals using the message "Waiheke is a world apart, not a world away".

"In these times when people are wanting to burst their bubble and get out they want that breath of fresh air ... we've got 133km of coastline, miles and miles of bush trails as well as some world-class restaurants and vineyards," Hyde said.



**Case status**

Confirmed	1,238
Probable	351

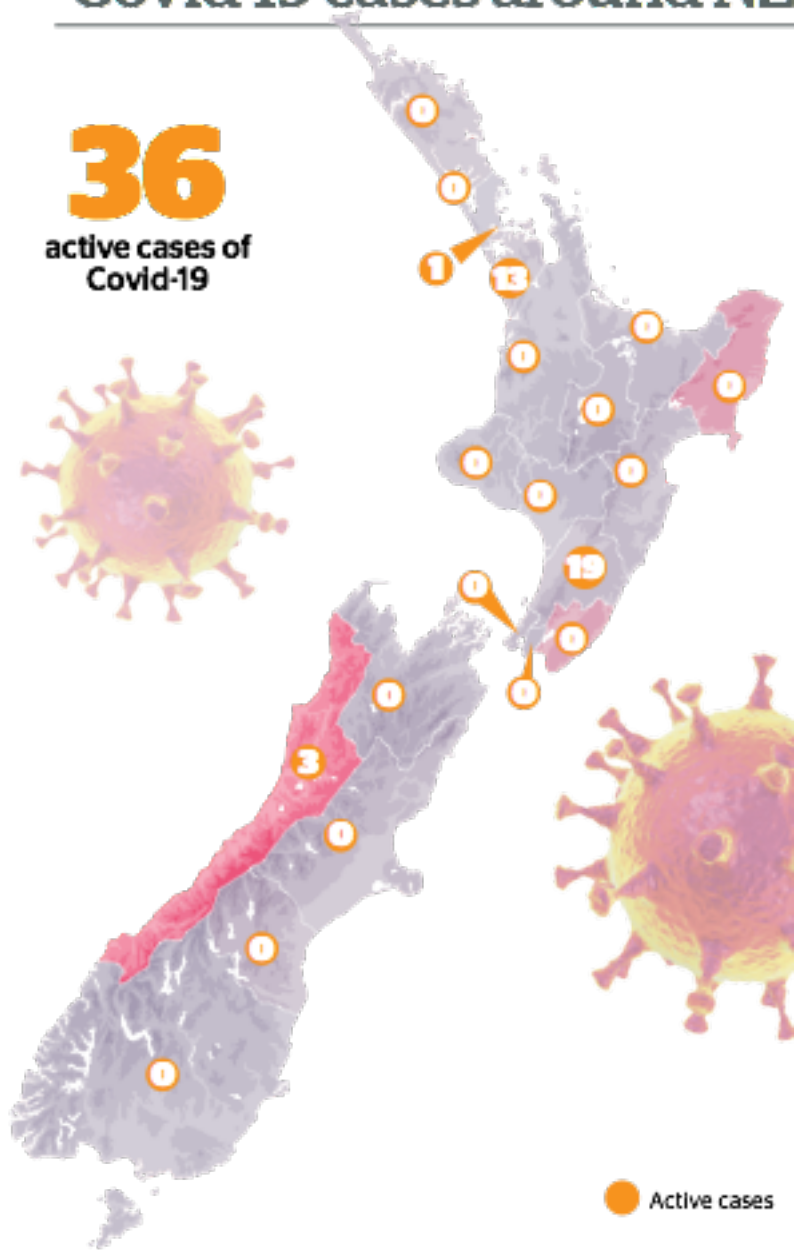
**Medical status**

Active cases	36
Recovered	1,531
Deaths	22
Currently in Hospital	0
Currently in ICU	0

**Source of transmission**

Contact with imported cases	454
Imported cases	641
Local, known source	388
Local, unknown source	89
Under investigation	21

# Covid-19 cases around NZ



Herald Network Graphic

Last updated: Thu 13th August at 1:17 pm Go here to see all our Covid-19 data