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## Covid-19: Hundreds onboard infected as cruise ship docks in Sydney after New Zealand tour

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The Majestic Princess has docked in Sydney after a 12-day cruise of New Zealand with hundreds of those aboard testing positive for Covid-19. (File photo) Photo: Wikipedia / via Jackhayes1

Epidemiologist Michael Baker is appalled that one in five passengers on a cruise ship that recently visited the Bay of Islands have tested positive for Covid-19.

Health authorities are working with the operators of the Majestic Princess cruise ship after it docked in Sydney Harbour with hundreds of people infected with Covid-19 on board, following a 12-day tour of New Zealand.

New South Wales Health has confirmed the ship was at the highest Covid-19 alert possible for those on board, with a Tier Three warning.

That means at least 20 percent of people who were on board for the cruise have the virus.

The Majestic Princess has more than 3,000 passengers and 1,000 crew, with several hundred believed to be infected.

Many passengers have been disembarking from the ship today after testing negative for the virus.

The president of cruise operator Carnival Australia, Marguerite Fitzgerald, said there were about 800 people infected, who were mostly passengers.

"This is a 12-day voyage and we started to see elevated cases about halfway through," she said.

Fitzgerald said the infected guests had mild or asymptomatic cases, and had been isolating in their rooms.

"Reflective of the increase in community transmissions, we too have seen more guests test positive for Covid-19 on the current voyage of Majestic Princess. This is a result of mass testing of our 3,300 guests," she said.

The company said it had been proactively preparing for Covid-19 incidents and was working closely with NSW Health.

But Professor Baker told RNZ the ship should have taken more care to reduce infections.

"I think it's appalling," he said.

"If they really have had 800 people infected at one time, they're really not looking after the safety of their passengers."

One man leaving the ship said he thought the cruise operator had done a good job with protocols, but passengers were not listening to instructions.

"It was scary because we heard about it [the infections] but we tested negative, and the Princess Majestic were really good with the protocols," he said.

"We wore masks for the last seven days and we were very careful when we went ashore, so some people don't just listen. Obviously they didn't [follow the rules] and that was the problem, people just don't take Covid seriously."

Another passenger praised the crew and said the cruise was enjoyable.

"Fantastic, no problems. The crew were terrific, and we've had a great time," he said.

"You've got to accept that this is how it's going to be, and no we thoroughly enjoyed it."

Carnival said all positive cases would be separated from other guests when they disembarked the ship.

"We understand this current wave of Covid-19 is concerning to many in the community and we take our responsibility in keeping everyone safe very seriously," it said in a statement.

"All guests disembarking have undertaken a rapid antigen test in the past 24 hours, which will determine how they will disembark the ship.

"All guests will be masked, regardless of Covid status."

NSW Health said in a statement that all Covid-positive people onboard were isolating and being cared for by the staff medical team.

"NSW Health's assessment is that the Covid-19 risk level for the Majestic Princess is now Tier 3, which indicates a high level of transmission," it said in the statement.

"Carnival has advised NSW Health that they are assisting passengers with Covid-19 to make safe onward travel arrangements."

Baker told RNZ the cruise ship industry should reflect on whether it had the proper protocols in place to care for infected passengers.

- **ABC, RNZ**