

Media release
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Wairarapa tackles Covid-19 vaccinations – ninety percent in ninety days

With just under three months to the end of the year, Wairarapa District Health Board is tackling Covid-19 vaccinations head-on.

Publishing data on an infographic that is updated three times a week on its website, the community uptake is available for all to view. It puts real time numbers front and centre, and Chief Executive, Dale Oliff, says there is a lot of work to do.

“We have 120 staff dedicated to Covid-19 vaccination, and they are doing a great job,” she said. “But there is no vaccination without arms.”

“We know we have managed through the easy bit, delivering vaccine to those that proactively went out to get it. Now, we need to get to the rest of our 12 years and older population. We really have our work cut out for us.”

The DHB’s infographic tells us there are 41,728 people eligible for the vaccine in Wairarapa and, of those, 51 percent were fully vaccinated by last Sunday. A further 24 percent have embarked on their vaccination journey, having had the first dose. That is a great start and a lot of hard mahi to get to that point. But it still leaves 25 percent that haven’t yet had a jab, and Oliff says it is time to change things up a bit.

“We are getting out into the community and we are making it as easy as possible for people to be vaccinated,” she said. “Our team will go out and vaccinate anyone that needs it, in their own home if need be. They just need to send us an email and we will be there.”

“Some people find it hard to leave the house and we understand that. We can send an outreach team to them. We are also going out to vaccinate groups in workplaces and clubs, and vaccinating friend and whānau groups that choose to have their vaccinations together.”

“We will do whatever it takes to get arms vaccinated and protect our region.”

The motivation behind the DHB’s bold campaign becomes clear when considered in light of an outbreak situation. Wairarapa DHB does not have an Intensive Care Unit and is often stretched on a regular day with staffing constraints and high acuity illness, like recently seen with the RSV virus.

“Our hospital would really struggle if we were to find ourselves in the middle of Covid,” Oliff says.

“We are a small rural region. Our community and primary healthcare services and our hospital would very quickly be overwhelmed in the event of a Delta outbreak.”

“The best protection is vaccination. We have the capacity and the community plan in place to vaccinate nearly 42,000 people twice. We just need them to bring us their arms.”

“Fully vaccinated people can still get Covid, it is true,” Oliff said. “But they are unlikely to get critically ill and they will recover faster, with less clinical need.”

“There are people in our community that cannot be vaccinated – our children under 12 and some of our very vulnerable. Ensuring that everyone that can be vaccinated, is vaccinated, is the best way to care for our whole population.”

“We need to vaccinate, to protect those that can’t.”

Anybody 12 years and over can be vaccinated. Information, including a calendar of community sites and advice for people wanting home and group vaccinations, is available on the Wairarapa DHB website.

Attribute to Dale Oliff, Chief Executive

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