



*“Right across the healthcare spectrum, we have had to adapt our practice to meet the additional demand of COVID-19. And we have done it well. We are fortunate in our region to have excellent relationships with our primary healthcare and community partners, which allows us to be readily flexible and agile in dealing with emerging situations, like we are seeing with this response.”*



# DALE

*an update from the chief executive*  
20 April 2020

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*As we prepare to move into Level 3 at midnight on Monday 27th April, and we ascertain exactly what that will look like across our services and for all of us personally at home, I want to take the opportunity to thank you.*

*Thank you all for all you have done to contribute to our response to the COVID-19 pandemic. This has been a trying time, but you have risen to that challenge and you have achieved what needed to be achieved with good humour and a pragmatic approach. We have worked with a sense of purpose and, in the face of global uncertainty and fear, we have not lost sight of the goal in front of us - serving our community as best as we can, always, and doing so calmly and professionally.*

*I have seen this District Health Board respond quickly to the changing needs of the COVID-19 environment. I have seen good leadership and strong commitment across the health sector in Wairarapa and the supportive response of*

*staff. I have seen the benefits of the strong relationships we have built in our region coming through in the way we have all worked together across our healthcare services to meet our communities needs in new ways. As a small DHB we can be nimble and we can flex to accommodate changing priorities. We have done this well.*

*It is too soon to celebrate success in this region but we can celebrate the great work that has resulted in almost three weeks of no new cases. That is down to all of you. And not just us here at Wairarapa DHB - but our primary care teams, pharmacies, supermarkets, councils, our Aged Residential Care and provider teams, NGOs and volunteers and all those I have left unnamed but who are equally responsible for Wairarapa faring well throughout this pandemic response. Be very proud. I am.*

**Dale**

## What will Level 3 mean for us?

The Prime Minister has announced that we will drop to Level 3: RESTRICT at midnight on Monday 27th April. We know this will take some time to properly digest. Information about the different COVID-19 Alert Level requirements and restrictions is [available here](#).

Significant restrictions will still apply under Alert Level 3 as there is still a chance of community transmission in some areas, and new clusters may emerge. If we are successful in controlling COVID-19 under Alert Level 3 New Zealand will be able to move down to Alert Level 2, where there are far fewer restrictions.

In Level 3, bubbles can expand a little to include other family and whanau, but physical distancing still applies and out of region travel is limited to essential purposes only. Businesses can open, but not interact with patrons. Level 3 may cause some confusion for people as it allows for local and regional variation in how we manage things, especially when it comes to hospitals and healthcare.



*Registered Nurse, Min Nah in full PPE in the ante room of a negative pressure isolation room. The wearing of PPE in itself adds significantly to the clinical staff's daily routine.*



## How will Wairarapa Hospital apply Level 3?

In Wairarapa, we are fortunate to have no known active cases of COVID-19. Of all the testing we have done during the response, we have only had six positive tests and two probable tests. The last of those was reported on 2 April and all eight have been identified as fully recovered now for a week. There is no evidence of community transmission. Because of this, our hospital is able to work under national hospital response framework Alert Level 1: GREEN from midnight on Monday 27th April, if not before. This is because we have no COVID-19 positive patients in hospital, no cases in the community, and we can return to service delivery almost as usual. In GREEN, we are in readiness phase:

- we still screen and triage for symptoms prior to any hospital attendance and manage symptomatic people separately
- we will keep our training and planning up for management of COVID-19 in our hospital
- we will actively plan for all scenarios of COVID-19 presentations and hospitalisations
- we will continue to engage with our regional partners to confirm arrangements for assistance should it be needed in the event of escalation
- planned care, acute, urgent elective and non deferrable surgery will be undertaken, and waiting lists reviewed for scheduling

If we have one or more COVID-19 positive patients in our hospital, or increasing community cases reported, Wairarapa Hospital will move back into YELLOW alert, and on to ORANGE and RED as illness impact demands.

## Will medical practices, ARCs and pharmacies and community nursing return to normal?

Because we have no active cases in Wairarapa, but we are testing in Wairarapa still, community services are at YELLOW alert.

For GPs, this means screening and phone triaging, streaming symptomatic people separately, like we will be in the hospital, and supporting high risk patients. There have been gains made in digital consultation methods that will likely be continued where appropriate in primary care practice. ARCs will need to continue with visiting restrictions and screening of visitors - remembering that the maximum number of 10 in a gathering still applies under Level 3. Our community nursing team will continue to care for clients in the district as they have throughout the response. Due care will still be taken to screen anyone with symptoms and, where necessary, PPE will be appropriately worn.

Managers will be kept well informed in advance of any changes, and plans will be updated as they happen on the Sharepoint site.

**Unite  
against  
COVID-19**



## What about our testing centres?

The testing clinics in Colombo Road and at each of the Carterton and South Wairarapa medical practices, as well as the mobile clinic, will continue to operate.

Referrals will still be required for testing and no sentinel (random surveillance) testing is being undertaken in Wairarapa at present. If the Ministry of Health chooses to undertake surveillance testing in Wairarapa, we will do so.

The testing centres will continue to be staffed by primary care, run by the PHO.



Dr Mizpa Essed swabs for the virus at a COVID-19 testing centre in Masterton

## Will the response management team continue to operate?

Our Incident Management Team (IMT) has been operating out of the DHB Emergency Operations Centre (EOC) in the boardroom on site at Wairarapa Hospital. Under Level 3, the IMT will continue to meet daily but will scale back to a working day week. Incident Controller (IC) Phill Halligan will determine increased or decreased requirement for IMT activity as the response progresses. We will continue to attend and feed into the 3DHB IMT, and liaise as necessary with the Wairarapa EOC (Councils) team as necessary.

## How will we manage risk for our most vulnerable?

As long as the COVID-19 response continues to affect our community, we will continue to protect our most vulnerable. The Maori Leadership Group will communicate widely under the Ko Wairarapa Tenei framework. Our Pacifica and disability teams will work alongside clients and their whanau and carers in the community, and our mental health teams will continue to provide care and resources for all those that need it. Our elderly continue to be well supported in Aged Residential Care facilities, and some visiting restrictions will still apply. Welfare packages are still available for local people in need, through Masterton Food Bank.

## How will I know what is happening?

You will continue to receive your daily COVID-19 update emails, though these may pare back to weekdays only. The COVID-19 Sharepoint page will continue to be kept updated and any significant information you need to know will be immediately brought to your attention. The regular CE's email updates will outline any detail pertinent to our work environment, and any changes that government may make that will affect the way in which we must operate.

If you have any concerns, and your questions are not answered by the FAQs or on the COVID-19 Sharepoint page - talk to your manager or speak to any of the Executive Leaders.