



Kōrero with Tristram

The importance of the Covid-19 immunisation campaign cannot be underestimated.

Well I'm sure, if you're feeling like me, that the relaxation of the summer break feels well behind us all now as we power into another year of hard work, big challenges, and exciting opportunities.

An important piece of news from members' perspective is the ongoing campaign to immunise the country against Covid-19.

There will be a sequenced roll-out based on those that are higher risk going first. The importance of this campaign, for our individual and collective safety, cannot be underestimated.

Some critical elements that our team are mindful of, and will advocate for, are the fact that you, our members, and everyone in your bubble, should be immunised as soon as possible when it becomes available in your area.

The Covid-19 variants are significantly more transmissible and therefore the possibility of the virus escaping our MIQ facilities and re-entering the community remains a serious concern.

Although the immunisations each provide a good level of personal protection, the pieces of evidence that are still lacking are whether the immunisation prevents someone transmitting the virus to others around them.

Currently it looks like they may not fully prevent transmission hence the usual protections of physical distancing, wearing masks if you can, handwashing and contact tracer app use are even more important now.

Additionally, as more variants are identified we need to be mindful how effective these immunisations will be in the longer term.

Bottom line, although we may already be sick of it, we haven't heard the end of Covid yet – it will be with us for some time into the future.

Meanwhile, the time-critical challenge is getting these immunisations to our most at-risk and less-connected communities of members.

As a team we are strategising about what local initiatives we can do to work with DHBs and other providers as they begin the roll-out to ensure our members are front-and-centre in the implementation.

We also want to encourage you to get your usual flu shot done and out of the way as soon as possible as the two immunisations cannot be given within several weeks of each other, and the Covid-19 campaign will be ramping up at about the same time.

Finally, I want to reassure you, from my role on the Government Covid-19 Immunisation Implementation Advisory Group, that from the data I've been seeing inside the Ministry of Health the immunisations are very safe, have been well tested (not just in trials but as deployed in several countries now) and seem to provide very good levels of protection from serious illness.

Dr Tristram Ingham
National Executive Chairperson