

# Joint Biosecurity Centre

## **Paper for SAGE small group: COVID-19 ALERT LEVEL and public behaviour changes 25 May 2020**

### Background

The Joint Biosecurity Centre, which will begin to be operational from 1<sup>st</sup> June 2020, will be responsible for setting the COVID-19 Alert Level. In advice to the CMO and JBC SRO Tom Hurd on 24 May 2020, the JBC team outlined the intention for the JBC to be the single authoritative advice on the COVID-19 Alert Level from end August 2020, but that in the intervening period the JBC would issue an Alert Level Assessment to the CMOs who would then determine the Alert Level.

In developing the Alert Level, the JBC has sought input from a number of experts, and is separately seeking views on the Alert Level process.

When the JBC was announced as part of the Recovery Strategy on 10<sup>th</sup> May the Prime Minister outlined the intention for the Alert level to be aligned to the recovery strategy, and Non Pharmaceutical Interventions. As the Alert is operationalised (noting there is now a public expectation for this to be reviewed in the coming week or so) it will be important that we are clear with the public, response organisations and media outlets about what is expected in relation to each Alert Level.

### Questions for consideration

The JBC team is seeking expert views on the following questions:

- a) To what extent should the Alert Level be directly and publicly coupled with NPIs, as they are in New Zealand<sup>1</sup>?
- b) Who are the key audiences for these alerts? How do their needs differ and how should we address this?
- c) How should changes to the Alert Level be best communicated with the public:
  - i. before a change is made to set public expectations, and
  - ii. as they are changed?
- d) How can public confidence in and compliance with key measures such as handwashing, social distancing and staying at home be strengthened at this stage of the outbreak?
  - i. How can the first review of the alert level be used to help reinforce efforts to protect the health of the public?

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<sup>1</sup> <https://covid19.govt.nz/assets/resources/tables/COVID-19-alert-levels-detailed.pdf>