

How to plan a Pride Event in a Pandemic

An Auckland Pride Guide to safely navigating COVID-19

Legal Stuff:

Before we begin, it's important to note that this is just a guide to planning your Pride event. This advice has been developed from Auckland Pride's experience of producing events, and delivering a Festival impacted by two lockdowns in 2021. Auckland Pride is not liable for any losses, financial or otherwise, because of advice followed in the following document. Again, this is a guide because the landscape, advice, and Government response to COVID-19 is constantly changing and adapting.

Introduction:

In 2021 the Auckland Pride Festival was impacted by two lockdowns in response to community cases of COVID-19, and our response to those two lockdowns was regarded as industry-leading. However, New Zealand's Delta outbreak has resulted in the Government changing strategy, and high rates of vaccination will complement basic public health measures and some levels of restriction where required.

While the overall goal of Auckland Pride's COVID-19 Response of keeping our community safe hasn't changed, our focus now has shifted to protecting our communities from transmission of COVID-19 at Pride events, alongside preparing for changes in restrictions that would change the way our events could take place. Vaccinations are now the key tool that we have to prevent transmission at our events, which is why they're mandated.

[You can see how we put our COVID-19 plan into action during 2021 here.](#)

New Zealand Event Sector Voluntary Code:

The Event Sector Voluntary Code has the most up to date information about advice and guidance from the Government around delivering events. It is a requirement for all Pride Events that they sign up to and follow the NZ Event Sector voluntary code.

[You can find the code, collateral, and more information on the NZ Major Events Website.](#)

Vaccination Mandate:

In order to protect Tāmaki Makaurau's rainbow communities from COVID-19 and ensure a safe and successful festival, attendees of all events in the 2022 Auckland Pride Festival will be required to show proof of vaccination. While only large scale events will be covered by the Government's mandate, Auckland Pride is taking this additional and proactive step to keep our communities safe. This requirement will be laid out in individual festival event agreements with event organisers.

While the Government will provide more detail in November about the rollout of vaccine passes, Auckland Pride have made this in principle decision to provide time, clarity, and certainty to our community and event organisers. Auckland Pride will make further announcements about the details of their implementation across the Festival when the framework is released by the Government.

In the meantime, event organisers should prepare for rolling out vaccine mandates. Have conversations with your venue, performers, and everyone involved with the delivery of your event and work through a plan. Most of all, make sure as many people as possible are vaccinated. These requirements will be in the event agreement between you and Auckland Pride, if you have any questions or concerns please contact us.

Planning for delivery under the COVID-19 Protection Framework:

The 2022 Auckland Pride Festival will be delivered while the [COVID-19 Protection Framework](#) is in place. It's important to understand how these new restrictions could impact your event, however with a blanket vaccination mandate in place this new framework provides greater certainty to all events with minimal disruption.

The requirements for vaccine-mandated events under the new framework are as follows:

Red:

Events can take place with restrictions similar to those of Alert Level Two. Events (indoors and outdoors) can take place with a maximum of 100 people, with 1m distancing, seated, and separated. Masks will be mandatory for all events delivered at Red.

Orange:

This is the level where the majority of Auckland Pride Festival events can go ahead with no restrictions. Events can take place normally with no gathering limits, except for those in public facilities (museums etc.) where capacity limits are based on 1m distancing. In these venues masks are also mandated, otherwise masks are recommended for all indoor events.

Green:

This is the level where all Auckland Pride Festival events can go ahead with no restrictions. Masks are encouraged for large indoor events.

You must have a plan for your event at each level, including if you'll postpone. This information must be provided when you register your event and will be displayed on your event listing on the Auckland Pride website.

There are additional aspects to think about beyond gathering/venue limits, if you're catering the event then that has to look different eg. food has to be delivered to each table rather than people getting up and grabbing it. Will you have to change your seating plans? The way in person events occur at Red differ significantly - so make sure you have a plan for every aspect of your event.

It's also worth thinking about timelines for making changes to your event, if we increased to Red on the day of your event will you postpone automatically? Or would you be able to quickly implement a socially-distanced or online version?

A lot of this decision making will come down to the specific circumstances of the move to Red. Many decided to postpone their events in 2021 when they thought they would originally go ahead with them. This information will be publicly available on the Auckland Pride Website - so try to make it as accurate as possible.

If restrictions are imposed that impacted your event, you will get a call from the Auckland Pride team confirming your plans and changes to your event. We will implement these as quickly as possible on your event listing, as well as provide an update through a media release & list of updates on our website.

If we moved levels which might impact your event (eg. Auckland had restrictions imposed for three days, but there were no decisions beyond that) the Auckland Pride team will confirm your plans under different scenarios. That change will then be implemented automatically once there's confirmation from the Government, and an announcement will be made. [We did this in 2021 here.](#)

Communication:

It's important to have a plan, because then you can communicate it. Communication with everyone involved in your event, from the venue, to the catering, speakers, artists, photographers, and anyone else who should know your plans in case restrictions are imposed.

It's subsequently a good idea to communicate this with your audience. There will be a section on your aucklandpride.org.nz event listing specific to your COVID plans, but make sure it's also visible on your Facebook and EventBrite events. This will increase public confidence in your event, as they'll know you're prepared and have a plan.

Auckland Pride will manage the overarching communications to media and our festival audience in the event of restrictions being imposed. We have these communications prepared and have the ability to release them within minutes of the Government's announcement. We encourage you to share these communications with your individual audiences once they are made from Auckland Pride.

Contracts and force majeure/cancellation clauses:

This is where things get technical, and where the legal disclaimer at the start really applies. Whether you have a contract with your venue, a written agreement with your artists, or have a funding agreement that allows your event to go ahead - it's incredibly important to thoroughly read, understand and have your own force majeure and cancellation clauses.

A force majeure clause is essentially the clause that outlines what would happen should the event be cancelled for a reason outside of either party's control. Usually things listed include war, weather, strike, but importantly it includes pandemic. Because it is possible an event cancellation could come as a result of the pandemic and therefore force majeure, this clause is vital.

First, not all force majeure clauses are equal. Each organisation, funder, or venue may have different force majeure clauses. It's important to have consistency across your force majeure obligations. For example, in a force majeure event you may be forced to return all of your funding, but still have to pay for half the venue - meaning you'd end up out of pocket.

So if your event is being funded, apply that clause as much as possible across the board. Build it into your other agreements and clauses so that there's consistency so that in case we suddenly returned to increased restrictions you wouldn't lose money! Other tip that applies regardless, is if there's money involved, put it in writing.

Get clarity around the force majeure clauses in your contracts. To some, a move to Red may not count as a force majeure because it can be planned for and the event can be executed (in most circumstances). Planning and executing an event in Red could be within a party's control, and therefore the event being cancelled may trigger the cancellation clause rather than the force majeure clause. So it's important to ask, would a cancellation because of Red be considered a force majeure, or just a cancellation? This will also inform your above decision making around whether to go ahead at what levels, as cancellation will incur higher costs than a force majeure.

Ensure that whatever you agree on is written into the contract, so that you're both covered in the case of restrictions being imposed. It's worth a reminder that contracts are legally binding documents - so get it right before you sign it.

Contact Tracing and QR Codes:

It's a requirement of all Auckland Pride events to be able to register participation in advance through EventBrite, this allows Auckland Pride to keep details in case Ministry of Health Contact Tracers need to contact trace the event and its participants. You must ensure everyone has their ticket checked.

Additionally, a QR code must be displayed either by the event or by your venue, and you must ensure every attendee signs in using the NZ COVID Tracer App to enable faster contact tracing. If your venue doesn't have one, please make your own, [the link to create a code is here](#).

Conclusion:

Auckland Pride's COVID-19 response has always been about keeping our communities safe and protecting the Festival from disruptions caused by restrictions, and high rates of vaccination achieves both. The COVID-19 vaccine is a safe and effective vaccine that will protect our communities from serious illness, safeguard those who cannot yet be vaccinated, and prevent our immunocompromised whānau from being exposed as much as possible.

The advice contained in this document can be summarised by: plan ahead, be transparent, and be consistent.

Plan ahead by understanding your contractual obligations, the limitations of your venue and the nature of the event, as well as understanding the different regulations at different levels of restrictions. Plan ahead by knowing what your event will look like at each level of restrictions, along with when you'll make your decision.

But also plan ahead by being ready to implement a vaccination mandate for your event, ensure that you're vaccinated, your performers and panellists are vaccinated, and everyone involved in the delivery of your event is vaccinated.

Be transparent by communicating with the team involved with your event, venues, artists, Auckland Pride, as well as with your audience to allow for a smooth transition of your event should the situation arise. It will also provide confidence to all those who want to come to your event, that you have a plan and that it'll be safe.

And be consistent, be consistent in the delivery of your event and make sure you follow all of the guidelines, to be consistent in your contracts and obligations, as well as being consistent with the rest of the events in the Auckland Pride Festival, providing a cohesive experience for our rainbow communities.

Ultimately, this is all for the safety of our communities. This is about minimising the risk of someone from our community contracting COVID-19, as well as mitigating onward transmission by enabling fast and effective contact tracing. It's also about doing everything right, so in the worst case scenario we can minimise the risk of the public weaponising our identities and setting our progress back.

We wish we would be once again delivering a Festival with zero COVID-19 in the community, but we can still deliver a Festival safely - with high rates of vaccination. Our communities know intimately the pain of losing loved ones to an epidemic, and the importance of following public health measures to protect ourselves. I know that the uptake from our communities will be exceptionally high as a result, and so for those of us who are vaccinated, check in with loved ones and chosen family, ensure they have reliable information, and support them to be vaccinated

Auckland Pride wants to once again responsibly deliver a Pride Festival in the midst of a pandemic, and to do so it takes all of us to be responsible, to ensure the safety of our community is paramount, to get vaccinated, and for all of us to follow the rules and guidelines provided to us by the Government.

Ultimately, we've done this before and we received a high level of praise from the events sector, our event organisers, and our community. We're best placed to be able to do this again successfully, and ensure another incredible Auckland Pride Festival.

If you have any more questions about this resource, or want to get a higher level of detail than what's been provided here, please don't hesitate to get in touch with our team. You can reach our Executive Director, Max, at director@aucklandpride.org.nz.

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