

Waikato Public Health Bulletin

Ngaa mihi o te Kirihimete ki a koutou. Christmas greetings to you all! We hope you enjoy this edition of the Waikato Public Health Bulletin and we welcome your feedback.

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/8GYMX9K>

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The bulletin is aimed at GPs and colleagues in primary and community care.

Ka Ora – New Telehealth Service for Rural Communities

Rural communities and whaanau will be offered additional access to primary care services, through a new after-hours clinical telehealth service 'Ka Ora'.

The 0800 service will provide after-hours clinical telehealth care (5pm – 8am) on weekdays, and 24 hours a day on weekends and public holidays. The service is staffed by kaiaawhina, nurses, GPs and emergency medicine specialists. The service will provide access for all rural people whether they are enrolled or unenrolled with a primary care practice.

Although the service is subsidised by Te Whatu Ora, a patient co-payment will be charged for consultations with a doctor. Under 14s will remain

free, and those on Community Services Card or who are 65 years and over will pay \$19.50.

Rural general practice clinics will also be able to refer whaanau and communities to the service after hours when they are at capacity to ensure rural patients have an alternative option to access healthcare when they need it. The rural clinical telehealth service is a new addition to New Zealand's telehealth options. For more information please visit the [Ka Ora website](#) and the [media statement](#) released by Te Whatu Ora.

The graphic features a dark teal background with a white geometric pattern. The text 'New rural after-hours telehealth service' is written in white. Below the text is a white telephone handset icon and the number '0800 252 672'. To the right is a circular inset showing a hand holding a smartphone displaying a medical app with a white cross icon.

KA ORA
TELECARE
Healthcare from home

Te Aka Whai Ora
Māori Health Authority

Te Whatu Ora
Health New Zealand

Cyanobacteria

During the warmer summer months Waikato's lakes are often affected by blooms of cyanobacteria. Cyanobacteria can release toxins which can be harmful to the health of people and animals.

Health effects are varied, but can include gastrointestinal symptoms, rash, skin and eye irritation, allergy symptoms, asthma exacerbation and neurological symptoms. These symptoms may not appear until some time after contact with the affected water.

BPAC have released a helpful [article on cyanotoxin poisoning](#) specifically written for primary care.

Currently (at time of writing) four of the region's lakes have a health warning in place, because of cyanobacteria levels above New Zealand guideline levels: Lakes Ngā roto, Hakanoa, Waikare and Kainui.

While health warnings are in place it is advised that these lakes not be used for any activity where skin contact with or potential ingestion of the water could occur. If people do choose to use these lakes they should shower and change their clothing as soon as possible afterwards

A reminder that any case of suspected cyanotoxin poisoning should be notified to the Medical Officer of Health. This can be done using the Hazardous Substances Disease and Injury Reporting Tool (HSDIRT) or by contacting the Public Health Service directly on (07) 838 2569.



Before heading out to the water, visit the 'Can I Swim Here?' section of the [Land Water Aotearoa \(LAWA\) website](#) to view the latest information, or keep an eye on our public health alerts on the Te Whatu Ora Waikato [website](#).

Safe Summer - Keep Cool!

Summer is officially here! With hot, dry days predicted ahead of us, people are at risk of dehydration, sunburn and overheating. It is important to think about sun protection and hydration, particularly if out with younger and older whānau members.

See the '[Stay cool and Go well!](#)' media statement released by Te Whatu Ora for more information and steps to keep cool this summer.

**Stay hydrated
this summer.
Remember water
for kids and pets.**



Te Whatu Ora
Health New Zealand

1 December: World AIDS Day

World AIDS (acquired immunodeficiency syndrome) Day is an opportunity for people worldwide to unite in the fight against HIV (the human immunodeficiency virus), to show support for people living with HIV, and to commemorate those who have died from an AIDS-related illness.

HIV is a virus that damages your immune system and weakens your ability to fight infection and disease. Untreated HIV can cause AIDS. There is no cure for HIV, but it can be controlled with a combination of medicines, known as antiretroviral therapy (ART). Most people living with HIV who are on ART will never develop AIDS. For more information visit the Healthify [website](#).

The World Health Organization affirmed that those living with HIV, who are on treatment and reach an undetectable level of virus, are at zero risk of HIV transmission to sexual partners.

In Aotearoa New Zealand, HIV is most commonly caught by having unprotected sex with an infected person. To protect yourself from HIV:

- Practice safe sex
- Don't share needles
- Have HIV antenatal screening
- Use pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) - for people who do not have HIV but who are at risk

- Use post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP) – emergency medication for people who do not have HIV but have likely been exposed to the disease



The steady decline of locally-acquired HIV reflects the continued impact of local HIV prevention and early detection and treatment. However, a higher proportion of late diagnoses have been observed which highlights the ongoing need for regular testing, increasing awareness in our communities whilst supporting those living with HIV.

To view the full epidemiological data, visit University of Otago AIDS Epidemiology Group [website](#). The [Burnett Foundation](#) supports Kiwis living with and affected by HIV through counselling, testing, support groups and education.

3 December: International Day of Person with Disabilities

December 3rd marks the International Day of Persons with Disabilities (IDPD). The observance of the day aims to promote understanding of disability issues and mobilise support for the dignity, rights, and well-being of disabled people, including in the workplace. For an inclusive, accessible, and equitable Aotearoa, visit [Whaikaha – Ministry of Disabled People](#) for more information and find out more about IDPD [here](#).

Magical Bridge Playground – All abilities, all ages, all welcome

Inspired by the kaupapa of Magical Bridge Foundation USA, the Magical Bridge Trust was formed by passionate members of Hamilton's disability community. With supporters and partners, they have brought together an accessible and fully inclusive playground to Hamilton that removes barriers for all individuals and whanau with physical and neurological disabilities. It is a play space for the whole community – one where tamariki and adults of all ages and abilities can enjoy.



Magical Bridge Playground – Claudelands Park
Image sourced from Waikato Times

The first international Magical Bridge Playground has officially opened at Claudelands Park, Kirikiriroa Hamilton on 1st December.

18 December: International Migrants Day

International Migrants Day, observed on the 18th December, is a day set aside to recognise the important contribution of migrants while highlighting the challenges they face. For more information visit the United Nations [website](#).

The Settlement Centre Waikato

Opened in 2005, The Settlement Centre Waikato support the settlement of newcomers, mainly migrant and former refugee communities to Hamilton. The centre offers free information and

referrals for service providers and local organisations.



Settlement Centre Waikato (Redevelopment) Image sourced from HMS Trust

The Settlement Centre redevelopment is currently underway and is projected to be completed in May 2024. The new centre will provide ethnic and migrant communities of Kirikiriroa, Hamilton access to the services they need to settle successfully in the region, in a modern, fit-for-purpose space which will enable diverse communities to come together.

Public Health Bulletin Feedback Survey

Please take a few minutes to provide us with your honest feedback at:

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/8GYMX9K>

We aim to improve our delivery of public health information based on your responses. Thank you for your time and participation!

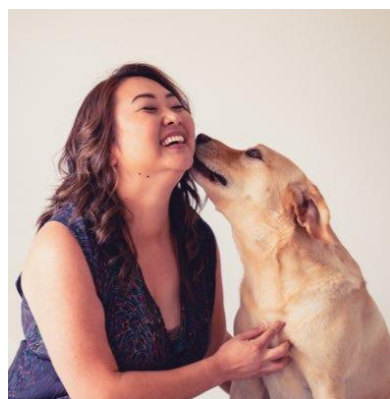
Staff News

Farewell to Cameron Duff and Vae Keung

We farewell Cameron Duff, Health Protection Officer and Vae Keung, Kai Ora (Healthy Active Learning) Advisor from Waikato Public Health Service. We wish both of our staff members all the very best for their new roles.

Welcoming Dr Kate Meerkerk

Teenaa koutou katoa
Ko Koria te w hakaaparanga mai, engari
Ko Taamaki Makaurau te whenua tupu
Kei Waipa au e noho ana
He Medical Officer au i Waikato Public Health Service
Ko Kate Meerkerk ahau
No reira, teenaa koutou, teenaa koutou, teenaa taatou katoa



Dr Kate Meerkerk

Dr Kate Meerkerk has rejoined the Public Health Service as a Medical Officer. Kate undertook medical training at the University of Auckland and in the United States, and did her Public Health training in the Waikato. She is a member of Ngaa Roopuu Waahine Maaori and enjoys supporting club rugby in the weekends. Within the Public Health Service, Kate will take a particular interest in alcohol harm minimisation, tobacco & vaping control, and healthy food portfolios. Kate will be available to GPs and healthcare professionals through the Public Health Service on-call phone.

Retirement after 39 years at Public Health: Health Protection Officer David Cumming

After 39 years working at Public Health, Health Protection Officer David Cumming has decided it is time to retire and start a new chapter. During his time at the Public Health Service, David has worked with many staff members across the organisation, and he has been a cornerstone of the Public Health teams' success. Since starting in 1984, David had led several health protection portfolios, such as border health, biosecurity, and shellfish programmes, making him an invaluable

asset. Thank you David for all your contributions to Public Health and the broader organisation. David will be greatly missed, we wish him all the best for his retirement.



From left: Health Protection Officers Gurpreet Bains, David Cumming, Justin Hankins, and Communicable Disease Clinical Support Officer Reena Narayan

Medical Officers of Health (MOoH):

Dr Felicity Dumble, Dr Richard Wall, Dr Richard Vipond
Medical Officers of Specialist Scale: Dr Elizabeth Becker, Dr Kate Meerkerk

After Hours:

MOoH: 021 359 650 **HPO:** 021 999 521

If there is no answer, please contact Waikato Hospital's switchboard 07 839 8899 and ask for the on-call MOoH.

During Office Hours:

Public Health (MOoH or HPO): (07) 838 2569 **Notifications:** 07 838 2569 ext. 22041 or 22020

Notifications outside Hamilton: 0800 800 977 **Fax:** 07 838 2382

Email: notifiablediseases@waikatodhb.health.nz

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Did you enjoy our bulletin? Please share it with your colleagues

Previous Bulletins at: www.waikatodhb.health.nz/for-health-professionals/public-health-bulletins/

Notifiable Diseases – Trends

Notifiable diseases (Waikato District) - period to: December 2023

*Stats NZ estimated 8.69% of the population resided in Waikato in 2021

Disease name	Waikato cases per month			Cases per month over the last year (mean)		
	October	November	Trend	Waikato	National	% Waikato*
Botulism	0	0	-	0.0	0.0	-
Brucellosis	0	0	-	0.1	0.4	25
Campylobacteriosis	31	65	▲	52.3	526.2	10
COVID-19	956	1,816	▲	3,653.8	44,719.7	8
Cryptosporidiosis	13	7	▼	9.0	70.2	13
Decompression sickness	0	0	-	0.0	0.1	0
Dengue fever	1	0	▼	0.1	4.5	2
Diphtheria	0	0	-	0.0	0.3	0
Gastroenteritis - unknown cause	1	1	-	1.5	22.7	7
Gastroenteritis / foodborne intoxication	7	3	▼	5.7	14.6	39
Giardiasis	11	6	▼	10.3	75.3	14
Haemophilus influenzae type b	0	0	-	0.1	0.3	33
Hepatitis A	0	0	-	0.2	3.5	6
Hepatitis B	0	0	-	0.2	1.8	11
Hepatitis C	2	0	▼	0.3	3.1	10
Hepatitis NOS	0	1	▲	0.3	0.7	43
Hydatid disease	0	0	-	0.0	0.3	0
Invasive pneumococcal disease	2	4	▲	5.4	61.9	9
Latent tuberculosis infection	0	1	▲	1.4	9.3	15
Lead Poisoning	0	0	-	0.0	0.0	-
Legionellosis	2	1	▼	1.0	19.2	5
Leprosy	0	0	-	0.0	0.3	0
Leptospirosis	2	2	-	2.5	15.4	16
Listeriosis	1	0	▼	0.4	3.2	13
Listeriosis - perinatal	0	0	-	0.0	0.3	0
Malaria	0	0	-	0.1	4.4	2
Measles	1	0	▼	0.2	1.2	17
Meningococcal disease	0	1	▲	0.4	5.1	8
Mumps	0	0	-	0.0	1.3	0
Murine Typhus	0	0	-	0.0	0.0	-
Pertussis	1	1	-	0.7	10.4	7
Q fever	0	0	-	0.0	0.0	-
Rheumatic fever - initial attack	2	0	▼	1.0	13.5	7
Rheumatic fever - recurrent attack	0	0	-	0.3	1.1	27
Salmonellosis	3	4	▲	5.0	70.8	7
Shigellosis	1	0	▼	0.5	11.3	4
Taeniasis	0	0	-	0.0	0.0	-
Tetanus	0	0	-	0.0	0.2	0
Tuberculosis disease - new case	1	3	▲	2.2	24.8	9
Tuberculosis disease - relapse or reactivation	0	0	-	0.0	1.2	0
Tuberculosis infection - on preventive treatment	0	0	-	0.0	0.2	0
Typhoid fever	0	0	-	0.5	6.3	8
VTEC/STEC infection	4	11	▲	7.2	84.9	8
Yersiniosis	6	11	▲	8.4	119.6	7