

Sectors ask for flexibility under level 3

Business leaders call for settings and support to help firms fire up

Rahul Bhattarai

Business leaders have welcomed news that Auckland will drop down an alert level at midnight tonight, although firms want to see more flexibility and continued financial support.

"It will be a long and hard road back to economic health but at least thousands of Auckland businesses locked down can reopen and reduce the burden and stress of trying to retain jobs, pay staff and bills and look after the wellbeing of family – and the community," Auckland Business Chamber CEO Michael Barnett said.

"Now we want to see a flexible level 3 to enable as many businesses to ramp up productivity and operations as quickly as possible to crank up the country's supply chains and economy."

Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern announced yesterday that Auckland will move down to level 3 at midnight tonight and stay there for two weeks after five weeks at level 4 in response to the Delta outbreak.

At alert level 3, movement is still restricted but food takeaways and deliveries would be allowed, as would the resumption of construction work. Contactless deliveries and pick-ups can occur.

Early learning centres can open to provide childcare for tamariki (children) whose parents need to go into work.

The hospitality sector has been seeking extra support including wage subsidy access in level 2, further targeted fin-

ancial support and a plea to

shift quarantine facilities out of the densely populated central business district in Auckland.

The Restaurant Association says a move down to alert level 3 offers a small glimmer of hope for the industry.

"It's a relief to see Auckland coming down to alert level 3 ... and we know many will be keen to get back into their businesses again and reconnect with customers," chief executive Marisa Bidois said.

"However, whilst some businesses can start trading again, the takeaway is not viable for all businesses. For those that are able to adapt to takeaway, their takings are typically 40-60 per cent down on normal revenue.

"What we'd now like to see is our businesses being able to get back to work as we move down the alert levels but also the right financial support [for] those that most need it."

Ardern said in other parts of the country under level 2 the hospitality industry would be able to have gatherings of 100 people, up from 50.

Hospitality New Zealand chief executive Julie White said: "The good news is that there was some movement, but level 3 is still highly restrictive for our industry, with the

majority of its members [telling us] that they won't open.

"But allowing 100 people in was positive news," White said. "And the reality is that this is going to be 48 days of zero revenue."



Michael Barnett