

New Zealand Prime Minister delays election four weeks

August 17, 2020

Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern today announced that New Zealand's general election and accompanying referenda will now be held on 17 October, rather than the previously announced date of 19 September.

This follows the Government's decision to reimpose a Level 3 lockdown in Auckland and lesser restrictions across the rest of New Zealand after a community outbreak of COVID-19 was detected last week.

Although the Electoral Commission has planned for conducting an election in these conditions and the Government expects to have reduced restrictions by 19 September, Ardern said she wanted to allow time for parties to conduct a more normal campaign prior to Election Day and give voters more certainty and security.

Parliament was to have been dissolved last week, triggering the election timeline set in legislation, but Ardern delayed that move. Now, Parliament will be reconvened this week to enable Parliamentary oversight of the Government's handling of the new outbreak and pass legislation if needed. Parliament will now be dissolved on 6 September and advance voting will begin on 3 October.

Ardern has said she does not plan any further delay, although allowing that a severe outbreak requiring a full 'Level 4' lockdown could require a reconsideration. The latest date the election can be held under the law is 21 November. A later date would need the agreement of 75% of Parliament to change the law. The Chief Electoral Officer also has the power to delay elections in week-long increments during a pandemic.

National Leader Judith Collins had called for the election to be delayed until as late as 2021 and offered National's support for the 75% majority required to pass the necessary law, but Ardern has rejected that call.

Deputy Prime Minister New Zealand First Leader Winston Peters had also called for a delay and implying that he might withdrawal his party's support for Ardern's Government, triggering a no confidence motion, if it did not occur. This could have led to several scenarios from a snap election to a constitutional crisis, although Ardern dismissed that threat.



New Wage Subsidy and Leave Support

Finance Minister Grant Robertson today released details of a new nationwide Wage Subsidy for the period that Auckland is in 'Level 3' lockdown.

This will be available to all firms that have had a revenue reduction of more than 40% due to COVID-19. Under current government plans, Auckland will be at Level 3 for two weeks.

The Wage Subsidy is \$585.80 for people working 20 hours or more per week (full-time rate) and \$350.00 for people working less than 20 hours per week (part-time rate). Employers cannot receive both this new Wage Subsidy and the extension to the original Wage Subsidy simultaneously.

To further support wide-scale testing, the Government has removed the revenue-drop and 'negatively impacted' tests for the COVID-19 Leave Support Scheme. This means businesses with workers who have been told by health officials or their medical practitioner to self-isolate will receive the equivalent of the wage subsidy to help cover that person's wages for the time they cannot be at work.

The mortgage deferral scheme is also being extended from its current end-date of 27 September, to 31 March 2021.

Finance Minister Grant Robertson also announced \$200m for the University of Auckland's Faculty of Education and Social Work construction project.

Latest national polls

	1 News <i>25–29 Jul</i>	Roy Morgan <i>July</i>	Newshub <i>16–24 Jul</i>	UMR* <i>12 Aug</i>	Curia** <i>28 Jul</i>
Labour	53	53.5	60.9	52	47
National	32	26.5	25.1	28	36
NZF	2	1.5	2	5.1	3
Greens	5	8	5.7	5.4	6
ACT	4.8	6.5	3.3	5.9	3

*UMR does Labour's polling. This is their poll for corporate clients.

**Curia does National's polling. This is a release of National's poll.

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Further information

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