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29<sup>th</sup> March 2022

## **Covid Advisory No 26 It is time to return to the table**

We all know the Government changed course from an elimination strategy to a managed approach. Last week it further loosened the controls in place.'

From 11:59pm on Friday 25 March:

- There are no limits for outdoor activities, such as gatherings and events, and food and drink businesses. My Vaccine Passes must be used until 11:59pm on 4 April.
- There is a 200-person limit for indoor gatherings and events — My Vaccine Passes must be used until 11:59pm on 4 April.
- If My Vaccine Passes are not used, the gathering limits remain unchanged.
- You do not need to wear a face mask outdoors.
- Other face mask rules remain unchanged — face masks are still required in most indoor settings.
- There is no requirement to scan in or for a business to display a QR code poster or have mandatory record keeping.

Next week the Government will announce what it is doing with the current “traffic light” settings. Any change in the settings will further free up the economy and broaden the scope for people to return to a more normal life.

The question is, have we reached the turning point or are we still amid the Covid-19 pandemic? The easy option is to continue with a very conservative approach and wait a little longer. However, it is quite right to acknowledge a high percentage of New Zealanders are double vaccinated and 72% of the population have had a booster. We know the bridge community is highly vaxxed. So where does that leave us?

Is it time to be more liberal?

The rules allow with very few exceptions for bridge clubs to return to the table. Whilst online bridge has filled the vacuum and allowed players the opportunity to play there is a large number who have declined the opportunity to play online and are waiting for clubs to resume face to face bridge. Already we are seeing clubs open their doors. There are

some clubs who are waiting for a change in the traffic light setting before resuming. That is fine as they respond to their members' needs.

I think everyone understands the risks and are taking appropriate precautions. Based on the level of awareness and the level of players being vaccinated there is little reason not to return to face-to-face bridge.

We have facilitated the transfer of numerous tournaments from F2F to Realbridge through until the last weekend of April. With the relaxation of the Govt settings we expect that tournaments scheduled from May (apart from those approved for online already) be conducted face to face.

Yes, we need to take precautions- my vaccine pass is still required until 11.59pm on 4 April, and face mask rules remain unchanged.

The parting message is to remain vigilant, take the necessary precautions, if you are unwell stay away, respect your fellow bridge players, encourage your fellow players to return to the table, but above all enjoy your bridge.

Allan Morris  
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