

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 has been developed from Auckland Pride's experience of producing events (before and during the COVID-19 pandemic), which has informed the way that we plan, negotiate, and deliver our events. 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 is constantly changing and adapting. Now that's out of the way, let's begin!

Introduction:

It's almost unbelievable to think that the Auckland Pride Festival was held this year, in 2020. But after the year we've had, it seems almost unfathomable (or a big mistake) to be going ahead with next year's Pride Festival - but we can do so safely, and for that we're so grateful. So that's the overarching theme of this document, safety. This document is a guide to keeping yourself as an organiser safe, your participants safe, and our communities safe.

This is about more than just yourself and your participants, our communities are relying on the safe execution of every single Auckland Pride event in 2021. We saw the vicious outpouring of homophobia in South Korea after a person infected with COVID-19 visited gay bars. So it's up to us to strictly follow all Government advice & restrictions relating to COVID-19, to have robust plans and preparations, and to err on the side of caution for the safety of our community.

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.

Alert Level Planning:

It's important to begin by planning what your event will look like at each alert level. Naturally, we can plan that our events will be held at Alert Level One but it's important to know what you'll do and when, we know that Alert Levels can change within a matter of hours from announcements with barely any forewarning. Plan like an alert level change will take effect the day of your event - that's how you know you're prepared.

First step is to know what you'll do at each alert level. There are things to know to help you make this decision, such as how many people your venue can hold at Alert Level Two when people will be socially distanced.

Eg: You're hosting a workshop and panel discussion, and you're expecting 80 people will show up. You decide that you'll go ahead at AL 2 because you can still do that safely in your venue, but at AL 2.5 or AL 3 you'll host the event on Zoom, and at AL 4 you'll cancel.

There are additional things to think about, if you're catering the event then that has to look different at AL 2, 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? Alert Level Two changes a lot about the way in person events occur - so make sure you COVID-proof every aspect of your event.

The second step is to then map out when you'll make your decision around alert levels. *Auckland Pride's plan for the Launch was that if we moved to AL 2 within a week of the Launch, we'd postpone it - which almost happened.*

You might also decide to postpone or cancel your event if an alert level move is too close to your event, or you may decide to implement your plans even if that change is on the day. Just have a plan!

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 we do move Alert Levels.

If you have a postponement date, check whether they can still make it on that date, or if they feel comfortable (they may be immunocompromised) being at an event during Alert Level Two. It's vital that the safety and comfortability of your team is a priority.

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.

It will also make it easier for Auckland Pride to quickly and clearly communicate the status of events should we move alert levels during the Festival.

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 a higher alert level 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 alert level two 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 Level Two 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 AL2 be considered a force majeure, or just a cancellation? What about AL2.5? 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 moving to a higher alert level. 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 track of participation numbers in the 2021 Festival, but more importantly allows us to keep details in case Ministry of Health Contact Tracers need to contact trace the event and its participants.

It's important that you keep a record of who attended (EventBrite allows you to scan tickets in) so that there's an accurate record. You should also create a unique COVID Tracer QR code, so that everyone can sign in using this QR code to also assist with contact tracing. [The link to create a code is here.](#)

Conclusion:

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 alert levels. Plan ahead by knowing what your event will look like at each level, along with when you'll make your decision.

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.

Auckland Pride wants to be able to 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, and for all of us to follow the rules and guidelines provided to us by the Government.

Putting on an event during Pride in the middle of a pandemic does mean there's additional responsibility. We know this can be daunting, but we've released this document to try and making the planning and execution of your event as easy as possible, and to prepare you in case of the worst. It is highly likely we'll be able to deliver a successful and safe festival at Alert Level One, and we can't wait for it.

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 Director of Pride, Max, at director@aucklandpride.org.nz.

Auckland Pride 2021: 3 - 28 February. aucklandpride.org.nz