



## CBACs rising to the challenge

The word CBAC has quickly become part of our everyday vernacular. Although technically not accurate, CBAC refers to the community based testing centres which were established rapidly around the greater Wellington region in locations where they could best meet the needs of the local community. Some were attached to medical centres, some in community halls or other council facilities.

Tents and other temporary structures sprang up, and with them, hundreds of staff needed to work on the frontline – meeting and greeting, directing, taking details, swabbing, security, cleaning, administration – you name it, they were all there. A remarkable effort, and admirable commitment, from a huge team of people in the face of enormous uncertainty.

CBACs were commissioned by the three DHBs and are operated by the PHOs. They were primarily established to test people who had been screened and triaged as meeting the case definition for COVID-19. Over time the case definition widened increasing the workload at CBACs considerably. Most recently surveillance testing was added for asymptomatic people who may have been exposed – frontline and essential workers including pharmacy and primary care staff, and people living and working in hostels for example.

When surveillance testing was announced, our PHOs – Tu Ora Compass, Ora Toa, Te Awakairangi, and Cosine – stepped up to the challenge with less than a day's notice and swabbed more than 1000 people over a 48 hour period.

Testing remains a priority at Level 2 where the potential risks increase as people start travelling around the country, going back to work and school and bubbles get larger.

To ensure priority populations were accessing testing, many CBACs started taking walk-ins from the public and CBACs in some areas began offering enhanced services to ensure people were getting welfare and social support, mental health and wellbeing care, and general practice care if needed.

Why has the Wellington region been so successful at keeping COVID-19 case numbers low? We believe it is because we have tested high volumes early and to date, more than 20,000 tests have been performed across the two DHBs – Hutt Valley and Capital and Coast – with a positivity rate under 1%.