



BRIEFING

Managing MIQ capacity constraints and criteria for assessing emergency allocations

Date:	13 November 2020	Priority:	Urgent
Security classification:		Tracking number:	2021-1310

Action sought		
	Action sought	Deadline
Hon Chris Hipkins Minister for COVID-19 Response	Agree to MBIE implementing the adjusted criteria for assessing requests for an emergency allocation in MIQ.	16 November 2020

Contact for telephone discussion (if required)				
Name	Position	Telephone		1st contact
Megan Main	DCE, Managed Isolation and Quarantine Unit	-	Privacy of natural persons	✓
Melleny Black	General Manager, MIQ Policy	-		
Privacy of natural persons	Manager, Allocation and Supply, MIQ Policy	-		

The following departments/agencies have been consulted
Ministry of Health, Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet, Ministry of Transport, Customs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade

Minister's office to complete:

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Approved | <input type="checkbox"/> Declined |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Noted | <input type="checkbox"/> Needs change |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Seen | <input type="checkbox"/> Overtaken by Events |
| <input type="checkbox"/> See Minister's Notes | <input type="checkbox"/> Withdrawn |

Comments



BRIEFING

Managing MIQ capacity constraints and criteria for assessing emergency allocations

Date:	13 November 2020	Priority:	Urgent
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Purpose

To update you on current capacity constraints in Managed Isolation and Quarantine (MIQ) over the summer holiday period and the implementation of the Managed Isolation Allocation System (MIAS).

To seek your agreement to criteria for granting and prioritising applications for an emergency allocation of a MIAS voucher.

Executive summary

There are currently 32 approved MIQ facilities operating in five regions: Auckland, Hamilton, Rotorua, Wellington and Christchurch. Our ability to meet demand for places in MIQ is driven by the fixed capacity of rooms available. Currently, we have around 4500 rooms set aside for returnees, which can accommodate an average of 6200 people at any one time. Other rooms are set aside for operational and contingency reasons. This capacity must be carefully and proactively managed in order to keep New Zealanders safe.

Most places in MIQ have been allocated until January 2021. In late October and early November, the MIQ system was put under pressure by the transition from the airline quota to the mandatory MIAS voucher process and a rapid increase in demand. We rapidly reprioritised offline vouchers to ensure all incoming travellers had a place in MIQ.

To alleviate pressures on the MIQ system, MBIE implemented temporary operational measures to ensure that returnees are safely accommodated. This included drawing on our operating contingency and restricting eligibility criteria for how we assess urgent applications for offline MIAS vouchers (emergency allocations).

Legal professional privilege

We have since eased some of the temporary measures, which enabled the release of an additional 100 places per day online on MIAS between 13 and 23 December. This has also enabled us to provide additional rooms (150 a fortnight) for emergency allocations. Demand for emergency allocations is challenging to predict, we will monitor it closely and adjust the number of rooms set aside as necessary.

We now seek your approval of a proposed set of revised criteria for granting and prioritising emergency allocations in the coming months. In issuing vouchers from the emergency allocation, the over-riding aim is to allow urgent travel that is necessary to protect the health, wellbeing and safety of New Zealand citizens and permanent residents. Criteria are set out in three categories, in order of priority, and will remain tight given continuing capacity constraints.

In addition to short-term measures, further work is underway to improve how we manage demand for MIQ places relative to capacity, especially from returning New Zealanders and other cohorts.

Recommended actions

The Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment recommends that you:

- a. **Note** that the following temporary managed isolation and quarantine (MIQ) operational measures were put in on 3 November 2020 to manage a surge in demand and the removal of airline passenger quotas:
- i. a temporary cap on vouchers available online via the Managed Isolation Allocation System (MIAS)
 - ii. restricted criteria for assessing MIQ emergency allocation applications
 - iii. a brief halt on airline ticket sales between 29 October and 3 November, and 7 to 10 December 2020
 - iv. suspending all non-scheduled charter flights until at least late December [commercial in-confidence].

Noted

- b. **Note** that MIQ has allowed for 150 emergency allocations to be made available per fortnight, with this number to be reviewed over time to ensure it is sufficient to accommodate travel which is genuinely urgent.

Noted

- c. **Note** that at present, emergency allocations may only be accessed by New Zealand citizens or resident-class visa holders who have an imminent threat to their life or serious risk to their health, which requires urgent travel to New Zealand.

Noted

- d. **Note** that in issuing vouchers from the emergency allocation, MBIE's over-riding aim is to allow urgent travel that is necessary to protect the health, wellbeing and safety of New Zealand citizens and permanent residents.

Noted

- e. **Agree** that MBIE will give highest priority to applications for an emergency allocation for people in the following circumstances (Category One priority):

- i. New Zealand citizens or residents where a serious risk to health exists for the applicant or their dependant, which requires urgent travel to New Zealand; OR
- ii. Where urgent travel is required to ensure a child is provided with appropriate care and protection.

Agree / Disagree

- f. **Agree** that where the emergency allocation capacity allows, consideration will also be given to people in the following circumstances (Category Two priority):

- i. New Zealand citizens or residents who are required to provide critical care for a dependent person in New Zealand and need to travel urgently to do so; OR
- ii. New Zealand citizens or residents, or critical workers (visa class), whose entry to New Zealand is time-critical for the purpose of delivering a critical health or public service, including the maintenance of essential infrastructure; OR
- iii. New Zealand citizens or residents, who are unable to legally remain in their current location and have no other option but to return to New Zealand; OR
- iv. New Zealand and non-New Zealand citizens, where urgent travel to New Zealand is required for national security, national interest or law enforcement reasons.

Agree / Disagree

- g. **Agree** that where space in the emergency allocation allows, consideration may also be given to requests for places from the emergency allocation for (Category Three priority):
- i. New Zealand citizens or residents entering New Zealand to visit a close relative who is dying or seriously ill, where timely travel is unlikely to be possible if the person books through MIAS.

Agree / Disagree

- h. **Note** that while these categories are intended to provide transparency as to how the emergency allocation will be used, there will from time to time be exceptional cases, which were not foreseen, where urgent travel is required in order to protect the health and safety of New Zealand Citizens or Permanent Residents.

Noted

- i. **Agree** that the Head of MIQ Operations and Deputy Chief Executive of MIQ will have discretion to allocate a voucher from the emergency allocation where they are made aware of such rare and exceptional cases.

Agree / Disagree

- j. **Note** that the revised criteria do not include economic considerations.

Noted

- k. **Note** that we will develop a prioritisation framework for when capacity does not allow all applications on a particular day to be approved.

Noted

- l. **Note** that MBIE will implement the changes to the emergency allocation application process as soon as possible.

Noted

- m. **Note** that there is no guarantee that a person who fits within these categories will receive an offline allocation, as this will depend on the number of applicants and available places.

Noted

- n. **Note** that we are keeping these settings under review to ensure they remain fit-for-purpose, and will brief you early next year on any future changes that may be required.

Noted



Megan Main
DCE, Managed Isolation and Quarantine Unit,
MBIE

13 / 11 / 2020



Hon Chris Hipkins
Minister for COVID-19 Recovery

18 / 11 / 2020

Background

1. Since 9 April 2020, all people entering New Zealand by air are required to undergo managed isolation or quarantine (MIQ) in an approved facility for 14 days, with very limited exemptions.
2. To ensure that arrivals into New Zealand did not exceed available MIQ capacity, in July 2020, Cabinet agreed to put in place an interim airline quota system to limit the number of people airlines could bring into the country. The quota system was limited in its ability to foresee and manage forward demand for MIQ places, so Cabinet also agreed to develop an online allocation tool that would allocate places in MIQ for all people coming into New Zealand by air (other than people who are exempt).
3. This paper brings together advice updating you on MIQ capacity pressures, implementation of MIAS, and changes being made to allocate available places for emergencies and time-critical travel.

MIAS was developed to replace the airline quota system

4. The Managed Isolation Allocation System (MIAS) is a web-based platform that went live on 5 October 2020, allowing most people to confirm their place in MIQ online.¹ Initially, this was voluntary. MIAS allocates rooms on a first-come, first-served basis for those legally entitled to enter New Zealand (irrespective of citizenship and residency status).
5. From 3 November, people entering New Zealand by air are legally required to have a pre-booked place in a managed isolation facility (MIF) obtained via MIAS. The airline quota system was stood down on the same date on agreement of senior MBIE and Ministry of Transport Officials (in accordance with the relevant delegation). MIAS is now the sole MIQ tool for managing demand for MIQ places.
6. The vast majority of people coming into New Zealand will be able to book a voucher online through MIAS. The primary approach to obtaining a voucher will be through a first-come, first-served approach using the online booking tool.

An offline allocation process was stood up in parallel to manage NZBORA risks and allow for time-critical travel

7. From time to time, exceptional circumstances may arise where obtaining a voucher through MIAS would result in a delay that justifies prioritising that person's entry into MIQ over others who may be seeking to come to New Zealand. In order to facilitate time-critical travel in exceptional circumstances, a very small pool of rooms is reserved in MIQ and allocated in a manual, application-based process (the emergency allocation).
8. Applications for emergency allocations were originally intended to be assessed against a broad range of factors agreed by the Minister of Housing (parameters attached as **Annex Two**). Applications are currently assessed against more restrictive criteria due to capacity constraints at this time.² Additional information around why the places set aside offline have decreased is attached at **Annex Three**.

MIQ capacity and the Managed Isolation Allocation System (MIAS)

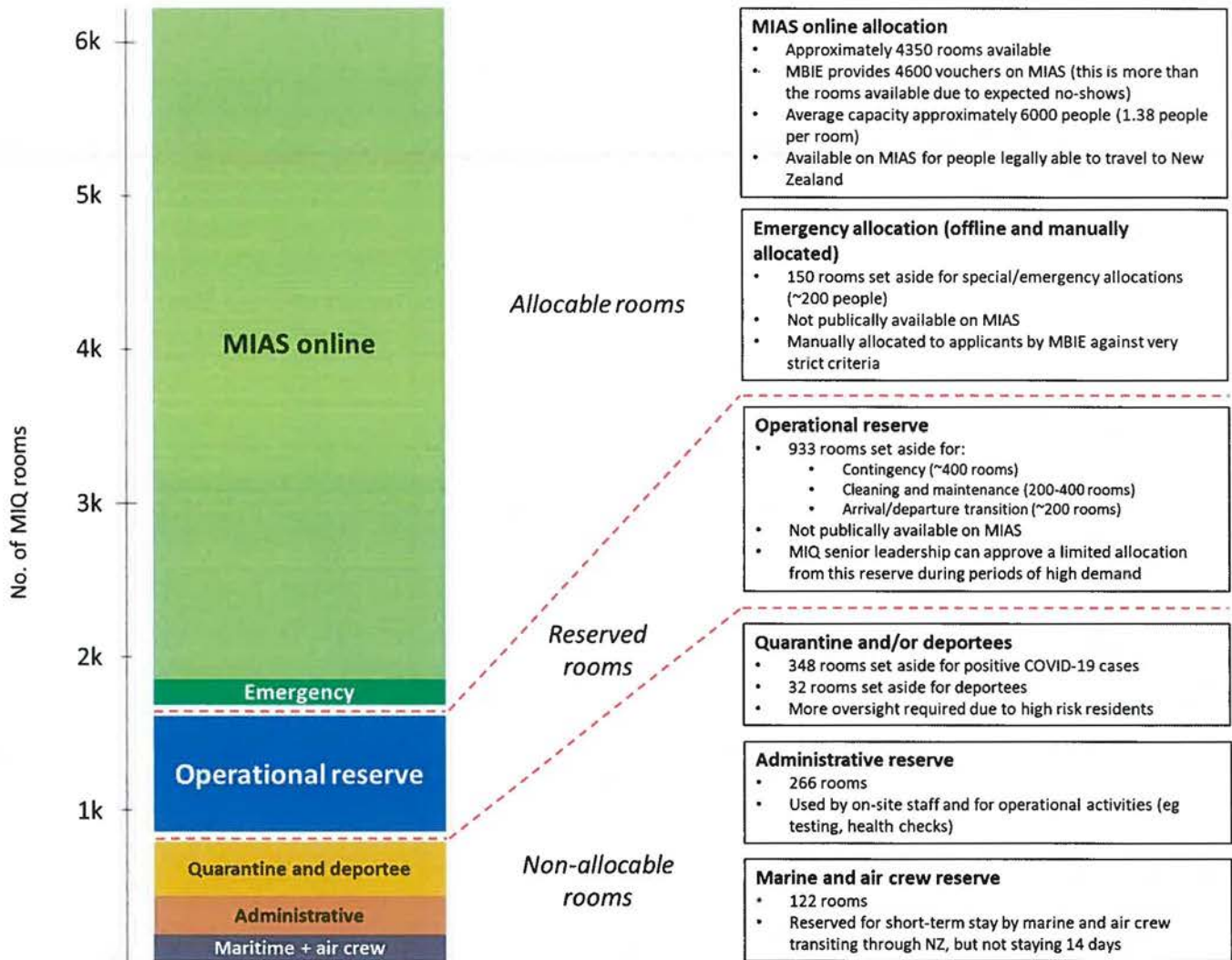
9. MBIE takes into account both people and rooms when operating MIQ capacity. The number of rooms within the system is finite, but the number of people accommodated within the system can vary depending on room occupancy.

¹ As of 5 November, MIAS has accepted 51,558 registrations, allocated 32,660 passengers into MIQ and issued 21,750 vouchers.

² At present, emergency allocations may only be accessed by New Zealanders who have an imminent threat to their life or serious risk to their health, which can only be resolved by urgent travel to New Zealand.

10. In addition, people who book their vouchers on MIAS do not always arrive at the border on schedule, if at all. These 'no-shows' can happen because people decide not to travel and forget to cancel their vouchers, airlines over-selling their quota, double bookings and other reasons.³
11. To account for these expected no-shows, there are 250 more vouchers available on MIAS than the fixed room capacity set aside for online allocations. This is a precautionary approach as it is still well under the actual number of no-shows we expect, and does not include the 933 offline rooms in the operational reserve.
12. The MIQ system is carefully managed, with rooms set aside for different, specific purposes on a fortnightly basis. The table below sets out the current breakdown of how MIQ room capacity is managed. Allocable rooms are available on MIAS. Non-allocable rooms are held offline for a range of other purposes.

Figure 1: Current breakdown of MIQ capacity



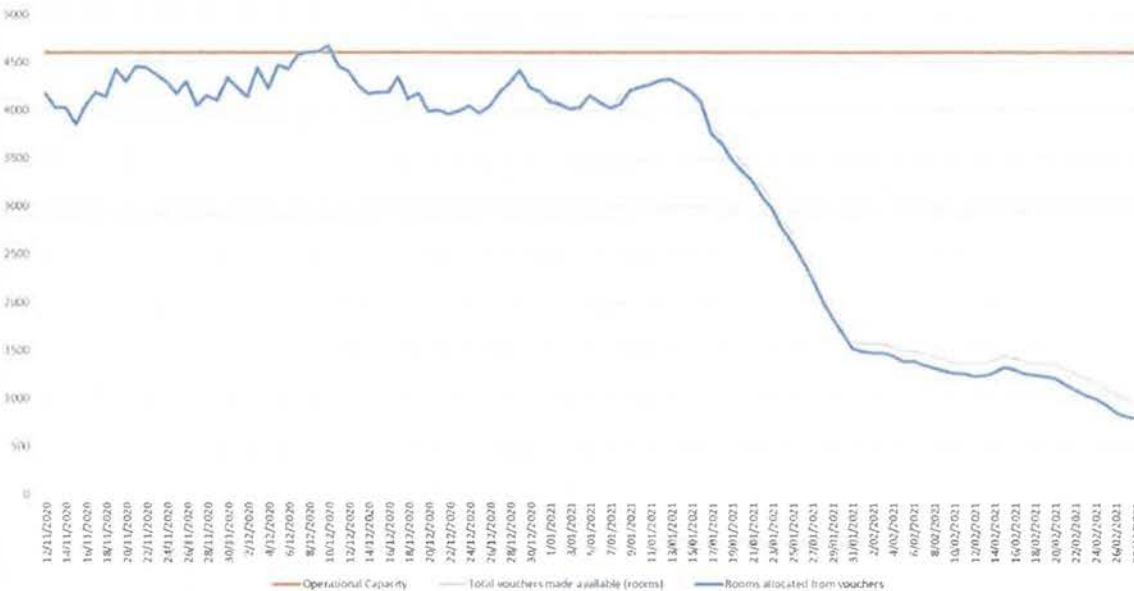
13. The figures above are indicative only, as the day to day numbers vary depending on operational priorities, unforeseen events, and workforce constraints (e.g., availability of cleaning staff).

³ Based on past data, we expect an average of 90 voucher duplicates, 190 voucher no-shows, and 275 flight cancellations to occur every fortnight, which totals 550 out of every 4500 vouchers allocated.

MIQ is now operating near full capacity due to unprecedented demand

14. MIQ will be operating at near full capacity between now and mid-January. There are currently limited places available online in MIAS for travellers and returning New Zealanders to book until February. We will continue to release additional places online as they become available, and continue to load additional places in December. We intend to release 1,200 rooms in January.⁴
15. The demand situation is dynamic, and it is uncertain as to when the current high demand for places in MIQ will reduce.
16. Figure 2 below shows the current allocations for the summer holiday period.

Figure 2: MIQ room utilisation based on vouchers allocated for 12 November 2020 to 28 February 2021 (As at 12 November)



17. The present pressure on MIQ facilities means we are unable to facilitate the arrival of any new large groups (i.e. those not already planned for) until at least mid-January 2021.⁵ Additionally, for brief periods between now and the end of the year, we are having to draw on places set aside in the operational reserve to ensure that all travellers holding an MIQ voucher can be accommodated in managed isolation on arrival in New Zealand.
18. It is not practicable to fill all available room capacity on any given day. We have provided further explanation at **Annex Four**.

High demand in the summer holiday period was anticipated

19. Due to this, we undertook an awareness campaign, advising returnees of the requirement to secure an MIQ voucher and recommending those intending to be back before Christmas do this at the earliest possible opportunity.
20. From the launch of MIAS to 2 November 2020 (i.e. the period which having a voucher was not a mandatory requirement) most passengers arriving at airports had a voucher.
21. Immediately before MIAS became mandatory on 3 November 2020, and in the transition from airline passenger quotas, there was a spike in demand and a change in behaviour as a result of several factors (some of which are continuing to impact the system):

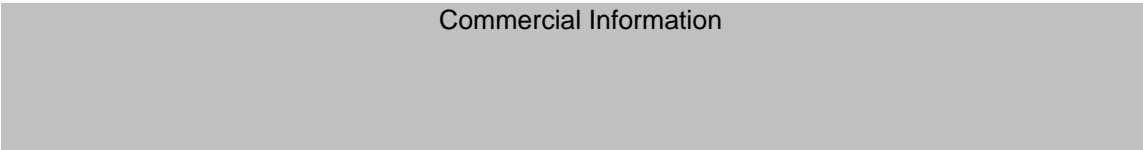
⁴ These rooms will be uploaded to MIAS once renewed hotel contracts are implemented.

⁵ Large groups are currently accommodated by ring-fencing a proportion of the online places on MIAS.

- a. airlines oversold their quotas during the month of October
- b. airline ticket sales increased due to the worsening global epidemiological outlook
- c. more ticket-holders are checking in for flights and travelling (fewer no-shows).

MBIE implemented measures to alleviate pressure on the MIQ system

22. MIQ has a finite capacity and must be managed carefully. When the change in returnee behaviour noted above became evident, we implemented a number of short-term operational measures, including:

- a. **Placing a temporary cap on vouchers available online via MIAS** – This was introduced in response to the significant spike in demand and to mitigate the risk that more returnees would arrive at the border than we could safely accommodate in MIQ.
- b. **Restricting eligibility criteria and number of MIQ places for emergency allocations** – As previously noted [briefing 2021-1204 refers], MBIE is now only approving applications for an emergency allocation⁶ for people who:
 - i. Are New Zealand citizens or resident-class visa holders, and
 - ii. have an imminent threat to their life or serious risk to their health, which can only be resolved by urgent travel to New Zealand.
- c. **Asking airlines to halt ticket sales** – Airlines were asked to voluntarily halt ticket sales for travel between 29 October and 3 November and 7 to 10 December. We continue to work closely with airlines to ensure current ticketing sales do not exceed capacity and that all returnees have an MIQ voucher before boarding their flight to New Zealand.
- d.  Commercial Information
- e. **Tidying up MIAS bookings** – Some vouchers held by potential returnees were for cancelled flights or people no longer intending to travel. We have worked with airlines to identify these vouchers and return these to the pool of places available to allocate.

23. We have since removed the cap on vouchers available on MIAS and are releasing additional vouchers, as noted above, and freed up additional places to hold offline for emergency allocations. We seek your agreement to revised criteria and a framework for prioritising these allocations.

Emergency allocations

We propose revised criteria for granting and prioritising emergency allocations in the coming months

24. In issuing vouchers from the emergency allocation, the over-riding aim is to allow urgent travel that is necessary to protect the health, wellbeing and safety of New Zealand citizens and permanent residents.⁷

⁶ 'Emergency allocations' were previously known as 'special allocations', but were redefined to reflect the more limited circumstances currently being approved for this class of allocation.

⁷ Including New Zealand citizens in the Realm of New Zealand: Tokelau, Niue and the Cook Islands.

25. Decisions on issuing vouchers will be made taking into account the health and vulnerability (including age and any extreme financial hardship) of those either seeking to travel, or who the applicant is seeking to travel to be with. Evidence to support claims in regards to health and vulnerability may be required, and in situations where evidence is requested but not provided, this may be grounds for a decline.
26. Within this context, we recommend the following framework for emergency allocations, and that these are prioritised according to the following tiered criteria:

Priority	Circumstances or reasons that apply
Category One	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New Zealand citizens⁸ or residents where a serious risk to health exists for the applicant or their dependant, which requires urgent travel to New Zealand; OR • Where urgent travel is required to ensure a child is provided with appropriate care and protection.
Category Two	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New Zealand citizens or residents who are required to provide critical care for a dependant person in New Zealand and need to travel urgently to do so; OR • New Zealand citizens or residents, or critical workers (visa class), whose entry to New Zealand is time-critical for the purpose of delivering a critical health or public service, including the maintenance of essential infrastructure; OR • New Zealand citizens or residents, who are unable to legally remain in their current location and have no other option but to return to New Zealand; OR • New Zealand and non-New Zealand citizens, where urgent travel to New Zealand is required for national security, national interest or law enforcement reasons.
Category Three	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New Zealand citizens or residents entering New Zealand to visit a close relative who is dying or seriously ill, where timely travel is unlikely to be possible if the person books through MIAS.

27. Due to the number of requests, applicants should not expect to be successful in obtaining a space under the emergency allocation for the purposes of travelling to see a dying relative. People in this situation will be encouraged to seek the next available online booking, in addition to making any request for an emergency allocation space.
28. For Category Three applications, MBIE will allocate places in the order that the requests were received, as officials are not able to make objective assessments of the relative merits for this type of request.
29. While these categories are intended to provide transparency as to how the emergency allocation will be used, there will from time to time be exceptional cases, which were not foreseen, where urgent travel is required in order to protect the health and safety of New Zealand Citizens or Permanent Residents. The Head of MIQ Operations and Deputy Chief Executive of MIQ will have discretion to allocate a voucher from the emergency allocation where they are made aware of such rare and exceptional cases.

⁸ New Zealand citizens include people from the Realm countries: Tokelau, Niue and Cook Islands.

30. In order to be eligible for an emergency allocation, the travel must be time-critical and the applicant legally entitled to enter New Zealand under our current border settings. Economic considerations are not taken into account with the proposed factors for emergency allocation, although they could be included in subsequent revisions where capacity allows.
31. There is no guarantee that a person who fits within any of these categories will receive an offline allocation, as this will depend on the numbers of applicants and available places. Applications will be triaged in order of priority in the event that not everyone who fits the criteria can be accommodated (ie Category One first, Category Two second and so on).
32. Where multiple applications in the same category cannot be approved due to capacity constraints, MIQ will prioritise cases in line with the overriding aim stated above.
33. The number of places set aside for emergency allocations and above criteria will be kept under review, with the intention that they remain in place while pressure on the MIQ system remains high. We will advise you early next year on the timing of further expanding the criteria, with reference to the parameters that were previously agreed by the Minister of Housing on 5 October 2020 [2021-0830 refers]. These originally agreed parameters are attached as **Annex Three**.

Ongoing work streams that will support managing MIQ demand

34. In addition to the short-term measures implemented to alleviate pressures on MIQ, a range of work streams are underway – within MBIE and across government – that will improve MIQ demand management and increase our capacity to meet demand from New Zealanders and other cohorts critical to our recovery efforts. These work streams include:
 - a. **Enhancing MIAS functionality** – This will mitigate the risk of New Zealanders facing an unjustified delay in entering New Zealand, as immigration settings ease, by providing dedicated places for booking by New Zealanders only.
 - b. **Trans-Tasman travel arrangement** – We are working to understand the implications of further states/territories in Australia unilaterally opening ahead of a trans-Tasman arrangement coming into force, and to understand the impact of passengers transiting through New Zealand to Australia.
 - c. **Elimination Strategy review** – We are working with the Ministry of Health as they progress work to refine and improve the Elimination Strategy from a public health perspective, looking at the ‘best’ mix of public health measures. Border settings and managed isolation and quarantine is the first area being explored in this work with a focus on the latest evidence, understanding of the level of residual public health risk (after measures are in place) and the costs (broadly defined).

Legal professional privilege

New class exceptions will need to be carefully prioritised due to limited MIQ capacity

39. As part of the ministerial decision making process for class exemptions, there are upcoming decisions about whether to allow a number of groups entry into New Zealand for the purpose of work or study. These include decisions on:
 - a. RSE workers (potentially 2,000 between January and March 2021)
 - b. international students (up to 1,000 bachelors and masters and family members before Semester 2, July 2021)
 - c. shearers (up to 60 in the next few months)
 - d. international media as part of Tourism New Zealand's strategic international media programme (up to 200 from March 2021).
40. Over time we also expect to see ongoing requests to admit and accommodate sports teams and cultural groups in MIQ. Class exceptions and other requests will need to be carefully prioritised, particularly in light of current pressures on the MIQ system and the uncertainty around when the current spike in demand will abate.
41. In addition, some previously agreed class exceptions are still being processed by Immigration New Zealand and will also need to be accommodated in MIQ. Class exceptions approved to date (as at 7 November) are:
 - a. Deepwater fishing crew (capped at 570) – 450 have been approved a visa
 - b. Rural contractors (capped at 210) – 94 have been approved a visa
 - c. Vets (capped at 30) – 8 have been approved a visa.
42. Immigration New Zealand is working on providing reports on arrivals of people granted border exceptions (in addition to the numbers of visas issued).
43. All class exceptions will need an MIQ voucher to enter New Zealand. Vouchers can either be obtained online via MIAS or in some limited circumstances they will be provided to groups manually.

Next steps

44. Officials are available to meet with you, should you wish to discuss the proposals in this paper.
45. Should you agree to the revised criteria for emergency allocation applications, MBIE will implement the changes as soon as possible, and:
 - a. advise previously unsuccessful applicants that are highly likely to meet the revised criteria of the changes.

- b. update the MIQ website and emergency allocation application form to reflect these changes based on the key messages attached as **Annex One**.
46. We will advise you early next year on the timing of further expanding the parameters used to assess emergency allocation applications.

Annexes

Annex One: Key communications messages

Annex Two: Original criteria for special allocations

Annex Three: Background information on emergency allocations

Annex Four: Factors currently impacting MIQ room usage

Annex One: Key communications messages

General comments about MIQ

- Ensuring the safety of all New Zealanders during this global pandemic is critical, and there is limited capacity in our Managed Isolation Facilities.
- On 3 November using the online Managed Isolation Allocation System (MIAS) to secure a place in before coming to New Zealand became compulsory.
- MIAS helps us manage the timing of people entering New Zealand so we can guarantee there is space to safely accommodate all arrivals. Everyone flying to New Zealand must have a valid MIAS voucher before they can board their flight.

We are responding to high demand leading into the summer holiday period

- Places in managed isolation are currently extremely limited due to high demand leading into the summer holidays.
- We're asking people to be flexible. If there are no available places in managed isolation on your preferred date, you should check if there are any places available on a later date.
- Every New Zealander can come home, but possibly not on the date they would like.
- We are strongly encourage everyone who has already bought tickets to confirm with their airline that their flight is operating, and to make sure that they hold an MIQ voucher.
- If people currently hold a voucher, but their flight has been cancelled or they do not intend to fly, we ask that they cancel their voucher. This will help to free up space for other New Zealanders to come home.

Emergency allocations are available in very limited circumstances

- With our summer holidays fast approaching, we're heading into a period of peak demand where Managed Isolation facilities will be operating at capacity. There is very limited availability for the rest of the year and during the holiday period
- For those who need to travel home urgently there is an emergency allocation process although this has a very restrictive criteria.
- Previously the criteria has been limited to New Zealand citizens or resident-class visa holders who have an imminent threat to their life or serious risk to their health, which requires urgent travel to New Zealand.
- We have adjusted the range of circumstances currently being considered for emergency allocations to include the following circumstances:
 - New Zealand citizens or residents where a serious risk to health exists for the applicant or their dependant, which requires urgent travel to New Zealand
 - Where urgent travel is required to ensure a child is provided with appropriate care and protection
 - New Zealand citizens or residents who are required to provide critical care for a dependant person in New Zealand and need to travel urgently to do so
 - New Zealand citizens or residents, or critical workers (visa class), whose entry to New Zealand is time-critical for the purpose of delivering a critical health or public service, including the maintenance of essential infrastructure
 - New Zealand citizens or residents, who are unable to legally remain in their current location and have no other option but to return to New Zealand

- New Zealand and non-New Zealand citizens, where urgent travel to New Zealand is required for national security, national interest or law enforcement reasons
- New Zealand citizens or residents entering New Zealand to visit a close relative who is dying or seriously ill, where timely travel is unlikely to be possible if the person books through MIAS.
- Regardless of the reason, to be eligible for an emergency allocation, the travel must be time-critical and the applicant legally entitled to enter New Zealand.
- Applications for an emergency allocation are a last resort option and the threshold is extremely high. A medical certificate may also need to be provided where relevant.
- There is no guarantee that a person who fits within these categories will receive an offline allocation, as this will depend on the numbers of applicants and available places. Applications would be triaged in the event that not everyone who fits the criteria can be accommodated.
- We expect that very few approvals would be granted, and it is important to note that people still need to complete their 14 days Managed Isolation.

Points of contact if people have questions

- If people have questions about managed isolation or obtaining a voucher online, they should seek further information at miq.govt.nz or by contacting 04 931 5720.
- If people require consular assistance they should contact their nearest New Zealand Embassy, High Commission or Consulate or the New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade.

Annex Two: Original parameters to assess emergency allocation applications

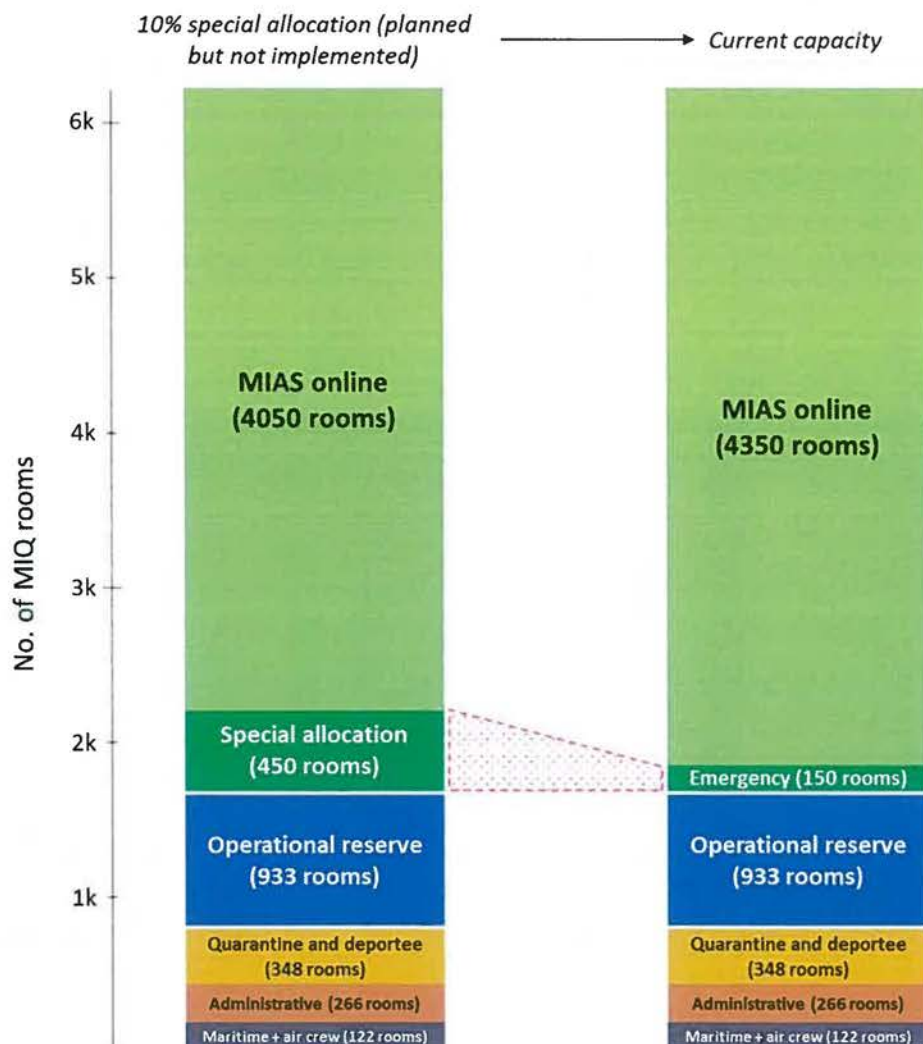
- The factors to guide assessment of requests for offline allocation, as per that paper were: “citizenship/visa status, waiting time, the time critical nature (or reason) of the request, and vulnerability”. The paper set out factors to guide the assessment rather than specific criteria of how the offline allocation would be managed.
- The table below sets out these factors in detail:

Waiting time	<p>New Zealand citizens have a right to return under the New Zealand Bill of Rights Act 1990, and most residence class visa holders have a right to enter under the Immigration Act 2009, and should not experience lengthy delays.</p> <p>New Zealand also has international legal obligations to facilitate the entry of some foreign nationals (e.g. under treaty status government-to-government Antarctic cooperation agreements).</p>	
Time critical	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Urgent need for medical treatment (traveller or accompanying family member) • For their mental well-being (traveller or accompanying family member) • Other risk to their health, safety or well-being (traveller or accompanying family member) • Grieve with family following the death of a close family member • Spend time with a close family member at the end of their life or support a close family member through serious illness or accident • Required to commence employment or a long-term study programme by a certain date (e.g. seasonal workers and critical workers) • They cannot legally remain in their country of residence beyond a fixed date (e.g. because their visa will expire) • Unpredictable travel options: Travelling from or connecting through a location with infrequent, unpredictable or sporadic transport options • Urgent need to address humanitarian or development concerns in the Pacific. (For example, a humanitarian incident in the Pacific may require prolonged, but difficult to plan for, back and forth movement between New Zealand and the Pacific. Critical workers may also be needed to address an infrastructure failure in a Pacific Island Country). 	
Vulnerability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vulnerability (with regard to the traveller/a family member travelling with them) • Health conditions or injury 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diagnosed mental health condition • Disability • Financial hardship

Annex Three: Background information on MIQ capacity for emergency allocations

How we moved from original decisions to hold 10 per cent MIQ capacity offline for 'special allocation' to the current settings

- The Minister of Housing (the Minister responsible for MIQ at the time) previously agreed that 10% of managed isolation spaces should be set aside for a special allocation process. This process prioritised the allocation of MIAS vouchers to individuals with time-critical travel requirements (briefing 2021-0830 refers). The Minister agreed that the percentage of places put aside for the offline prioritisation function would be regularly reviewed.
- A range of pressures on MIQ as a result of transitions from the airline quota to the mandatory MIAS voucher system (as outlined above), and a rapid increase in demand in late October and early November required an operational response. Places originally set aside for the special allocation process needed to be rapidly reprioritised to ensure all incoming travellers had space in MIQ (i.e. the 10%). If this step was not taken, there was a real risk of people arriving without an available place.



- Only a small number of rooms remained available to allocate via the special allocation process. MBIE officials decided to 'tighten' the criteria for special allocations to manage demand, along with the expectations of people applying for MIAS vouchers through this process. Officials changed the name of the process to 'emergency allocations' to reflect the tightened criteria.

- Due to the short-term measures taken, the present spike in demand has been managed, although the number of MIAS vouchers available in December and January is still low.
- We have learned key lessons from the last month in which the emergency allocation has been operating:
 - processing emergency allocations (MIAS vouchers) is a time consuming and resource intensive task.
 - managing application volumes and public expectations requires clear assessment criteria for MBIE staff and for the 'factors considered' to be explicit and as narrow as possible.
 - estimating an appropriate proportion of vouchers to set aside for emergency allocations is challenging, and needs to take into account whole system pressures
- When considering existing application volumes, individual circumstances and the proposed new criteria, we consider that providing for up to 150 emergency allocations strikes a balance between the publicly available online vouchers and emergency allocations at this time (i.e. ~3%). However, we will keep this number under review.

Emergency allocations vs MIQ exemptions

- The **emergency allocation** process is designed to manage the flow of people into the MIQ system, and these people must complete a full 14 days in managed isolation.
- MFAT advice is that there are currently 272 active consular cases involving 363 people that relate to COVID-19 travel restrictions. This includes but is not limited to MIQ capacity issues. These cases indicate the number of New Zealanders currently facing travel-related issues.
- Since 1 November, MFAT Wellington-based Consular Division has received approximately 75 enquiries relating to MIQ capacity issues. In addition, our overseas posts have experienced a surge in enquiries relating to MIQ capacity issues.
- **Exemptions** from managed isolation are granted in rare circumstances. Exempted individuals are exempted from the specific public health requirements of managed isolation, and alternative public health arrangements are put in place.
- Applications for exemptions are considered on a case-by-case basis, in consultation with health professionals, and the threshold for approval is very high. These are only approved where confident that the health risk of transmission is very low.
- Exemptions may be considered for: joining a person in managed isolation (e.g. for a guardian to join an unaccompanied minor); transiting through New Zealand medical needs (e.g. for persons requiring hospital-level care); exceptional circumstances (end of life visits are approved only in very few circumstances). 383 exemptions have been approved out of 2195 applications since 13 July 2020.

Annex Four: Factors currently impacting MIQ room usage

There are several reasons why room capacity is not consistently filled. Some factors can be addressed, while others are less predictable or beyond MIQ control. Factors include:

- **'Dead vouchers'** – These occur when MIQ vouchers (for a room) have been booked on MIAS, but the corresponding room is never filled. Causes include:
 - people who booked a voucher decide not to travel (and forget to cancel their voucher)
 - flights are cancelled and people no longer arrive on their scheduled day, if at all
 - multiple vouchers are booked for the same rooms.
- Even if rooms are empty on a given day, they may not be empty for the full 14-day period required to allocate to another returnee.
- A **'shadow effect'** – This is caused when rooms are filled in sharp surges of returnees (rather a steady stream). Sufficient rooms need to be held in advance to ensure the surge of returnees can be accommodated when they arrive. In addition, when a surge of returnees reach the end of their stay, there is a steep drop-off in room occupancy that cannot always be met by timing the next incoming group of returnees.
- **Volume and timing of incoming flights** - Even if rooms are empty on certain days, these do not always perfectly match the schedule and volume of incoming flight. For example, less flights may land on a certain day of the week, meaning that less rooms are filled. As above, these vacant rooms do not have a corresponding vacant voucher, because they are not empty for a full fortnight.
- **Room cleaning** – We typically set aside 200-400 rooms to account for a 24-hour room cleaning that happens every time a returnee leaves isolation, but currently there are logistical and workforce constraints that make it difficult to meet the 24-hour timing. Work is ongoing to improve this and we hope to free up some additional rooms to release in MIAS in the coming months.

General comments

- There is a risk that by over-correcting for any of the factors above, we overshoot our operational capacity and need to use rooms set aside for contingency. While this risk is acceptable in small doses, it should not become a regular occurrence. Rooms set aside for contingency are critical to ensure our system stays resilient and continues to keep New Zealanders safe.
- Nevertheless, we are constantly reviewing and improving our operational procedures to ensure we efficiently use our limited supply of MIQ places. MIAS enables us to collect useful data to support operational planning, and will continue to do so as we add to its functionality.