



BRIEFING

MIQ emergency allocation criteria – merging Category Two and Category Three

Date:	1 December 2020	Priority:	Urgent
Security classification:		Tracking number:	2021-1599

Action sought		
	Action sought	Deadline
Hon Chris Hipkins Minister for COVID-19 Response	Agree to merge Category 2 and Category 3 of the previously agreed criteria for assessing and prioritising emergency allocation applications.	1 December 2020

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

The following departments/agencies have been consulted

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 Withdrawn |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



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MIQ emergency allocation criteria – merging Category Two and Category Three

Date:	1 December 2020	Priority:	Urgent
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Purpose

To seek your agreement to a revised two-tier set of criteria for assessing and prioritising applications for an emergency allocation in Managed Isolation and Quarantine (**MIQ**).

Recommended action

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

- a **Note** your office has directed MBIE to merge the provisions previously agreed in Category Two and Category Three before implementing the revised emergency allocation criteria.

Noted

- b **Agree** to the revised set of criteria for assessing and prioritising applications for an emergency allocation in MIQ as set out in the table below:

Priority	Circumstances or reasons that apply
Category One	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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 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 A person whose entry to New Zealand is time-critical for the purpose of delivering a critical public or health service, such as the provision of specialist health services required to prevent serious illness, injury or death; or the maintenance of essential infrastructure whose failure would result in significant harm or disruption to a large number of New Zealanders; 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; OR New Zealand citizens or residents entering New Zealand to visit a close relative who is dying, where timely travel is unlikely to be possible if the person books through MIAS.

Agree / Disagree

- c **Note** to reduce the number of ineligible applications we receive, we have clarified the wording in the criteria allowing for urgent travel to see a 'close relative who is dying' (not 'dying or seriously ill').

Noted

d **Note** as previously agreed, the Head of MIQ and Deputy Chief Executive MIQ will still have discretion to allocate a place in MIQ where they are made aware of rare and 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

e **Note** that to reduce non-urgent applications, our public messaging will emphasise that MBIE will only consider applications where travel is time-critical and people are willing to travel at short notice.

Noted



Megan Main
Deputy Chief Executive
Managed Isolation and Quarantine Unit, MBIE

1 / 12 / 2020



Hon Chris Hipkins
Minister for COVID-19 Response

1 / 12 / 2020

Background

1. On 27 November, we provided advice on the criteria for assessing and prioritising applications for emergency allocations in MIQ [briefing 2021-1574 refers]. That paper sought a minor change to the criteria initially agreed [briefing 2021-1310 refers] and outlined how MBIE will implement the emergency allocations within current capacity constraints.
2. Our recommended criteria were set out in three categories to prioritise between different applications, both in terms of whether or not to approve them and when to allocate MIQ places available, if approved.
3. Your office has directed MBIE to merge Category Two and Category Three before implementing the revised emergency allocation criteria. This will reduce the likelihood that people who would have been eligible under Category Three miss out on an emergency allocation altogether, or on their preferred date of travel, at the expense of accommodating people eligible under Category Two.
4. This paper seeks your agreement to this change, and provides advice on how and when MBIE will be able to implement the revised criteria.

Merging Category Two and Category Three criteria

5. We are seeking your agreement to the revised emergency allocation criteria, which are set out in two categories below:

Priority	Circumstances or reasons that apply
Category One	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• New Zealand citizens^[1] 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• A person whose entry to New Zealand is time-critical for the purpose of delivering a critical public or health service, such as the provision of specialist health services required to prevent serious illness, injury or death; or the maintenance of essential infrastructure whose failure would result in significant harm or disruption to a large number of New Zealanders; 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; OR• New Zealand citizens or residents entering New Zealand to visit a close relative who is dying, where timely travel is unlikely to be possible if the person books through MIAS.

^[1] New Zealand citizens include people from the New Zealand Realm: Tokelau, Niue and Cook Islands.

6. As previously agreed, the Head of MIQ and Deputy Chief Executive MIQ will still have discretion to allocate a place in MIQ where they are made aware of rare and 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 requested changes will reduce officials' ability to prioritise applications

7. Ranking different application 'categories' enables officials to prioritise when deciding:
 - a. whether to approve or decline an application
 - b. when to allocate the places available
 - c. which applications to process first.
8. We do not anticipate that merging the provisions in Category Two and Category Three will affect whether we can approve or decline eligible applications. Based on available information, we are confident 150 rooms a fortnight will be sufficient to meet demand.
9. We do expect that the changes will:
 - a. ensure people seeking to visit a dying relative will not always be prioritised below other applicants in Category Two
 - b. increase the complexity of allocating MIQ places on people's preferred dates of travel
 - c. increase the complexity of processing large numbers of applications.
10. To mitigate these complications, it is important to reduce the likelihood of receiving non-urgent applications. While such applications would not be approved, they would still take considerable time and resources to process.

Steps to reduce ineligible applications

11. To reduce the number of non-urgent applications, we intend to explicitly state in the emergency allocation application forms that applicants must be willing to travel within a short timeframe if their application is approved (exact timeframe to be confirmed, but we expect this to be 5-10 days). Public communications will also emphasise that applications should only be made for time-critical travel requests.
12. Our intention is to prevent the emergency allocation process from becoming a 'back-door' into MIQ for people who could have otherwise secured a voucher online through the Managed Isolation Allocation System (MIAS).
13. We have also clarified the wording in the Category Two provision that allows for urgent travel to see a 'close relative who is dying' (not 'dying or seriously ill'). This clarification better conveys the intended purpose, which is that people will be granted an emergency allocation in situations where a close relative is likely to pass away before the time when a voucher for MIQ is available online.
14. In the unlikely event that demand for emergency allocations does exceed supply, we will in the first instance look to re-prioritise any cancelled vouchers. If this is not sufficient, we will be required to prioritise between applications. Merging the second and third categories will make these prioritisation decisions, if they are required, more challenging.

As previously advised, we expect 150 rooms per fortnight will be sufficient to accommodate all eligible applicants under the revised criteria

15. Based on previous applications for emergency allocations and exemptions, 150 rooms per fortnight should be sufficient to provide applicants with a place in MIQ. However, on any given day there may be an unusually high number of eligible requests that mean we cannot allocate places on everyone's preferred date of travel.
16. In such instances, we will prioritise requests according to category and operational guidelines being developed by MBIE, and look to allocate places at the next available opportunity. This should not result in too long a delay, as we are able re-prioritise cancelled MIAS vouchers to accommodate urgent travellers at short-notice.
17. Clear public communications will be critical to manage people's expectations and reduce the number of applications that do not meet any of the criteria or the threshold for urgent travel.

Where do the 150 rooms come from?

18. Currently, the 150 emergency allocation rooms have not been ring-fenced (i.e. not physically set aside). This approach was deliberately chosen as it was uncertain when the revised emergency allocation process would commence and how many places would be provided. Ring-fencing rooms would have resulted in unused rooms at a time of exceptionally high demand for returning New Zealanders.
19. There are two main inefficiencies in the system that allow for 150 rooms to be made available per fortnight:
 - a. returnees who have either booked too many MIAS vouchers, or do not have a flight corresponding to their voucher (this accounts for approximately 5-10 empty rooms per day)¹
 - b. returnees who have a MIAS voucher but do not arrive in New Zealand (this accounts for an average of 7-8 rooms per day)²
20. Due to these two inefficiencies, we are confident that there will be 150 rooms available for emergency allocations per fortnight. Over time, we may transition to an explicit ring-fence of the 150 rooms if demand remains high. We anticipate this will be available by mid-to-late January.
21. It is possible that after the high demand during the summer holiday period abates, and a greater number of places are available to be booked online, this ring-fence may not be required.

The number of eligible applications could change in the coming weeks and months as we publicly communicate the revised criteria

22. Our best estimates for likely demand for emergency allocations are based on information collected via the MIQ exemptions process, as well as the initial phase of the emergency allocation process. If demand from New Zealanders seeking to return home reduces to levels seen before the summer holiday period, the need for places set aside for emergency allocations will be much lower.
23. The criteria used for assessing these applications, and the number of places set aside for emergency allocations, will be kept under review. We will aim to ensure the right balance

¹ At present, MIQ does not have the ability to cancel vouchers booked online where travellers have multiple MIAS vouchers (i.e. double bookings) or do not have a flight corresponding to their MIAS voucher. MIQ will shortly undertake a process to remove some inefficiencies from the system, such as double bookings.

² These no shows can be due to a range of reasons and represent a typical no-show rate for airlines. As a result, we are consistently running slightly below our operational capacity target.

between people seeking urgent travel and the efficient use of MIQ places for other New Zealanders and eligible travellers seeking to enter New Zealand.

Next steps

24. If you agree to the revised criteria, we will operationalise the changes as soon as possible.
25. We expect the new criteria will be ready to go live later this week. MBIE will issue a media release to announce the changes.