



AIDE MEMOIRE

Implementing the new MIQ emergency allocation criteria

Date:	2 December 2020	Priority:	High
Security classification:		Tracking number:	2021-1652

Information for Minister(s)

Hon Chris
Minister for COVID-19 Response

Contact for telephone discussion (if required)

Name	Position	Telephone	1st contact
Privacy of natural persons	Manager, Allocation and Supply, MIQ Policy	Privacy of natural persons	✓
	Policy Advisor, MIQ Policy		

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 Withdrawn |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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Purpose

To set out how and when MBIE will implement the new criteria for emergency allocations in Managed Isolation and Quarantine (**MIQ**), and to provide MBIE's key communications and public messaging on the changes.

Privacy of natural persons

Manager, Allocation and Supply
Managed Isolation and Quarantine Unit, MBIE

2 / 12 / 2020

Implementing the new emergency allocation criteria

Context

1. On 1 December, you agreed to an expanded set of criteria for assessing and prioritising applications for emergency allocations in MIQ [briefing 2021-1599 refers].
2. These changes will allow more New Zealanders (and some other eligible people) seeking urgent and time-critical travel to secure a place in MIQ when no vouchers are available online via the Managed Isolation Allocation System (**MIAS**).

The new criteria will go live on Friday 4 December at 10am

3. We will issue a media release to announce the changes (see **Annex Two**). Any applications yet to be processed, or received after 1 December, will be assessed under the revised criteria.¹
4. Officials will update the MIQ website and emergency allocation application forms to reflect the new criteria. The MIQ website is the only channel where people can make an application (i.e. we have the same process in place for everyone).

¹ We currently have 467 pending applications.

5. Implementing the changes will not require more rooms to be added to MIQ, nor will it result in people with MIAS vouchers losing their place at the expense of an emergency allocation. Based on information available, we have conservatively estimated that an average of 150 rooms per fortnight will be available due to existing inefficiencies in the system [briefing 2021-1599 refers]. This equates to around 10 rooms per day that can be allocated to eligible applicants under the new criteria.
6. Officials processing requests will use the criteria to inform which applications to process first, and when to allocate available places in MIQ. We expect all eligible applicants will be able to receive an emergency allocation, though if demand is unusually high on any given day, some Category Two applicants may need to wait a few more days to receive their place in MIQ.

Public communications

7. Previously there has been a high level of media interest in emergency allocations and individual stories.
8. MBIE will issue a media release at 10am on Friday to announce the updated criteria, and anticipate we will receive requests for comment and interviews once the media release has gone out. Deputy Chief Executive Megan Main will be MBIE's media spokesperson and will be available for interviews. We will actively correct misinformation and proactively offer interviews with Megan if needed to provide balance.
9. Given time that has passed, we will not be proactively contacting previous applicants (who were not approved) that might have been granted applications under the new criteria. This is due to the likelihood that for many of those applicants, these changes may be too late (e.g. their close relative may have passed away). There is a high risk that we would cause additional distress by proactively contacting these cases. It is possible some people who have previously applied could approach news media or take to social media to express unhappiness that this change comes too late for them.
10. Some industry stakeholders continue to reach out to MBIE and other government agencies seeking urgent allocations in MIQ for critical workers. While we cannot guarantee any applications will be successful under the revised criteria, we will communicate the changes that have been made in response to ongoing unresolved cases (i.e. they are still looking for an emergency allocation).
11. For more detailed communications information, we have attached our communications plan (**Annex One**), draft media release (**Annex Two**) and key messages and reactive communications lines (**Annex Three**).

Annexes

Annex One: Communications plan

Annex Two: Draft media release

Annex Three: Key messages and reactive communications

Annex One: Communications plan – Change of MIAS emergency allocation criteria

Background

- 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 have 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 a broader ranges of circumstances.

Communications and media approach

Media

- Previously there has been a high level of media interest in emergency allocations and individual stories.
- We will issue a media release and fully anticipate we will get requests for comment and interviews once the media release has gone out. Deputy Chief Executive Megan Main will be the media spokesperson and will be made available for interviews. We will actively correct misinformation and proactively offer interviews with Megan if needed to provide balance.
- It is possible some of those who have previously applied could approach news media or take to social media to express unhappiness that this change comes too late for them.
- Our communications approach is to ensure that we are prepared for potential media questions and queries. We will do this by briefing our social media and call centre teams with approved reactive Q&A’s should they receive any questions. A range of key messages and reactive QAs have been drafted.

Web

- Web content has been drafted and is ready to be published to coincide with the issuing of the media release at 10am on Friday 4 December, alongside an updated emergency allocation .pdf form.

Audiences

Internal		
Audience	What they need to know	Responsibility for communication
MIQ Communications and Service Centre	Reactive Q&A’s	MIQ Comms
MBIE social media	Reactive Q&A’s, awareness	MIQ Comms

Minister's office	Reactive Q&A's, awareness	MIQ Comms
External		
Media	Media release Responses to queries	MIQ Comms
Unite Against Covid / AoG team	Reactive Q&A's, awareness	MIQ Comms

Update on Managed Isolation emergency applications

4 December 2020

Attribute comments to Megan Main, MBIE Deputy Chief Executive, Managed Isolation and Quarantine

The range of circumstances for those who need to apply for an [emergency allocation](#) in managed isolation to travel home to New Zealand urgently has been widened.

Places in managed isolation are currently extremely limited due to high demand leading into the summer holidays. 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 now adjusted the range of circumstances currently being considered for emergency allocations to include a broader range of circumstances.

These decisions are not easy ones to make. We are sympathetic to the distressing situations people applying for an emergency allocation are in. We need, however, to balance each individual application with our critical work to ensure the safety of all New Zealanders and the limited available capacity in Managed Isolation Facilities by sequencing beds as they become available.

Emergency allocations are a tiered system. Applications will be prioritised depending on their category, as these reflect the most time-critical situations which may require travel to New Zealand. Category 1 applications will be given priority over Category 2.

Please note: This section contains a draft media release. This was prepared and offered by MBIE/MIQ, but it does not necessarily represent messages that the Minister for Covid-19 Response accepted or ever used. The link to the final media summary is here: <https://www.miq.govt.nz/about/news/update-on-managed-isolation-emergency-applications/>

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Media contact: Privacy of natural persons media@mbie.govt.nz

Annex Three: Key messages and reactive communications

Primary messaging

- The range of circumstances for those who need to apply for an emergency allocation in managed isolation to travel home to New Zealand urgently has been widened.
- Places in managed isolation are currently extremely limited due to high demand leading into the summer holidays but we have to ensure there is room for people who need to travel urgently.
- 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 now adjusted the range of circumstances currently being considered for emergency allocations to include a broader range of circumstances.
- These decisions are not easy ones to make. We are sympathetic to the distressing situations people applying for an emergency allocation are in.
- We need, however, to balance each individual application with our critical work to ensure the safety of all New Zealanders and the limited available capacity in Managed Isolation Facilities by sequencing beds as they become available.
- Emergency allocations are a tiered system. Applications will be prioritised depending on their category, as these reflect the most time-critical situations which may require travel to New Zealand.
- We're able to do this now because since the Managed Isolation Allocation System (MIAS) became a legal requirement on November 3, we've been able to closely study the data of travellers into New Zealand. Our experience with the new system and changes in traveller's plans have enabled us to optimise space within New Zealand's Managed Isolation facilities.
- The complex nature of international travel during this global pandemic is seeing widespread disruption to flight schedules, affecting travel plans for those with vouchers for managed isolation facilities.
- Since 3 November we have seen around 5-10 rooms unused per day as a result of people who have either booked too many vouchers, or do not have a flight corresponding to their voucher. We have also seen around 7-8 rooms unused per day as a result of people who have a voucher but do not arrive in New Zealand.
- Due to these factors, we're confident we can make around 150 rooms available per fortnight for those who need to travel urgently.

The new criteria

- Emergency allocations are a tiered system. Applications will be prioritised depending on their category, as these reflect the most time-critical situations which may require travel to New Zealand. Category 1 applications will be given priority over Category 2.
- There is no guarantee that a person who fits within these categories will receive an emergency allocation, as this will depend on the numbers of applicants and available places.
- The emergency allocation process is a last resort option and the threshold is extremely high. To be eligible for an emergency allocation, the travel must be time-critical, the applicant must be legally entitled to enter New Zealand and they must be willing to travel at short-notice. Evidence will be required to support all applications to ensure a fair and consistent process and it is important to note that people still need to complete their 14 days Managed Isolation.

Category One

- 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

- 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 the Managed Isolation Allocation System.

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 submitting a question on the enquiry, feedback and complaints form on the [MIQ website](#).
- 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

Reactive Q+As

What about all the people who have already applied and were declined?

- Anyone who has previously applied and believes they are now eligible is welcome to apply using the new application form. Evidence will be required to support all applications.

Is there a specific amount you're setting aside?

- We're confident we can make around 150 rooms available per fortnight for those who need to travel urgently. We will review this number over time to ensure it is sufficient to accommodate travel which is genuinely urgent while not compromising the operational safety of our 32 facilities.

Will you be prioritising requests?

- Yes. Emergency allocations are a tiered system. Applications will be prioritised depending on their category, as these reflect the most time-critical situations which may require travel to New Zealand.

Why has the government suddenly widened the Emergency Allocation criteria? Could more people have been granted Emergency Allocations previously?

- We're able to do this now because since the Managed Isolation Allocation System (MIAS) became a legal requirement on November 3, we've been able to closely study the data of travellers into New Zealand. Our experience with the new system and changes in traveller's plans have enabled us to optimise space within New Zealand's Managed Isolation facilities.
- The complex nature of international travel during this global pandemic is seeing widespread disruption to flight schedules, affecting travel plans for those with vouchers for managed isolation facilities
- Since 3 November we have seen around 5-10 rooms unused per day as a result of people who have either booked too many vouchers, or do not have a flight corresponding to their voucher. We have also see around 7-8 rooms unused per day as a result of people who have a voucher but do not arrive in New Zealand
- Due to these factors, we're confident we can make around 150 rooms available per fortnight for those who need to travel urgently.

Does this mean people with dying relatives will now be able to get a voucher?

- People in this situation are now eligible to apply, yes. To be eligible for an emergency allocation, the travel must be time-critical, the applicant must be legally entitled to enter New Zealand and they must be willing to travel at short-notice. Evidence will be required to support all applications to ensure a fair and consistent process and it is important to note that people still need to complete their 14 days Managed Isolation.

How many people have already applied?

- As at 2 December, there have been 1220 requests for an emergency allocation. Of the requests processed so far, 91 have been approved.

What impact will this have on industries that are crying out for overseas workers – horticulture, shearers etc?

- We've got to balance the needs of these sectors for workers to support our economic recovery with the needs of the many New Zealanders who want to return here and the amount of capacity that we have. It is a balancing act and right now, our priority is getting kiwi's home for Christmas – particularly those who need to get home urgently and can't get a voucher.
- RSE workers won't be arriving in New Zealand until mid-January, when there will be more room in Managed Isolation facilities.

What is the difference between an emergency allocation and an exemption?

- Exemptions relate to being exempt from a requirement to stay in isolation facilities, or an exemption to leave managed isolation for a specified time, or an exemption to enter a managed isolation facility to join a child or support someone in isolation who is vulnerable or unable to care for themselves.
- Emergency allocations relate to Managed Isolation Allocation System (MIAS) vouchers. Sometimes there will be no places available in the Managed Isolation Allocation System for particular dates when travellers want to arrive in New Zealand. For those who need to travel home urgently there is a very restrictive emergency allocation criteria. It is important to note that people still need to complete their 14 days managed isolation.

I've got an emergency allocation voucher. Why can't I automatically get an exemption from managed isolation?

- We are sympathetic to the situations of people applying for emergency vouchers. However, ensuring the safety of all New Zealanders during this global pandemic is critical. The needs of people facing exceptional circumstances must be balanced with the need to protect the New Zealand public from COVID-19. For most applications to leave MIQ early, a suitably qualified health practitioner has to confirm that the person departing meets the low risk indicators for COVID-19.

I've got a life-threatening illness and I've received an emergency allocation voucher. Will I get an exemption to leave MIQ early?

- If your medical needs can't be met in a managed isolation facility, then you can apply to access medical services in an alternative location through an exemption application. You will need to adhere to a strict release plan whilst outside of managed isolation facilities. This could include restricted contact, physical distancing, use of personal protective equipment (PPE) or other infection prevention and control measures. Understandably, there is a high threshold for medical exemptions. Where your needs can be met in the isolation and quarantine facility, then we require you to complete your stay.

If needed – The difference between emergency allocations and exemptions

- The reasons we might grant an emergency allocation space in a managed isolation or quarantine facility are different to the reasons for exempting a person to depart or leave one of those facilities early.
- Exemptions relate to being exempt from a requirement to stay in isolation facilities, or to leave managed isolation for a specified time, or to enter a managed isolation facility to join a child or support someone in isolation who is vulnerable or unable to care for themselves.
- Emergency allocations relate to Managed Isolation Allocation System (MIAS) vouchers.
 - Sometimes there will be no places available in the Managed Isolation Allocation System for particular dates when travellers want to arrive in New Zealand.
 - For those who need to travel home urgently there is a very restrictive emergency allocation criteria. It is important to note that people still need to complete their 14 days managed isolation.
- Exemption applications mainly relate to being exempt from a requirement to stay in isolation facilities for the full 14 days.
 - Once you have a voucher, there are four exemption application types available via the online application process: Transit passenger, Medical Exemption; Joining Someone in Managed Isolation and Exceptional Circumstances.
 - All the exemptions must meet strict criteria as we receive a large number of applications.
 - The application process involves a strict public health assessment, and you must meet the low risk indicators for COVID-19 to be considered for an exemption.
 - The Medical Exemption is usually the most appropriate exemption for those needing to access medical services during their stay in a managed isolation and quarantine facility. To be successful, you must be unable to receive those services in a managed isolation facility and a strict and detailed release plan is required.
- Understandably the threshold for approval of emergency allocations and exemptions is high.

- We have to balance the needs of people facing exceptional circumstances with the need to protect the New Zealand public from COVID-19. There are only a limited number of spaces available in our managed isolation facilities.

General messaging about MIAS

- 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.