



AIDE MEMOIRE

Class Exceptions: MIQ Update

Date:	8 December 2020	Priority:	High
Security classification:		Tracking number:	2021-1669

Information for Minister(s)

Hon Chris Hipkins
Minister for COVID-19 Response

Contact for telephone discussion (if required)

Name	Position	Telephone	1st contact
Privacy of natural persons	Manager, Supply & Allocations, MIQ Policy Unit	Privacy of natural persons	✓
Privacy of natural persons	Senior Policy Advisor, MIQ Policy Unit	Privacy of natural persons	

The following departments/agencies have been consulted

MIQ Operations, Immigration Policy

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 Withdrawn |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 provide you with advice on proposed class exceptions, an update on current MIQ utilisation and forecasted demand for spaces in MIQ facilities, and MIQ operational constraints between January and March next year.

Privacy of natural persons



Manager, Supply and Allocations
Managed Isolation and Quarantine Policy, MBIE

8 December 2020

Managed Isolation and Quarantine (MIQ) capacity

MIQ will be operating at near-full capacity until mid-February

1. There remains strong demand for places in our managed isolation facilities. Travellers are now unable to secure an MIQ voucher online in our Managed Isolation Allocation System (MIAS) until mid-February.
2. Most of this demand is from returning New Zealanders, with many wanting to return for the summer holiday period and to be home prior to the start of the school year in February 2021.
3. Demand from returning New Zealanders is likely to remain strong throughout the first quarter of next year. There are a number of changes in countries with large New Zealand resident populations that may encourage more New Zealanders to return to New Zealand, such as the phasing out of wage-subsidy schemes in the United Kingdom and Australia. However, it remains challenging to forecast MIQ demand over the medium-term, particularly given any potential safe travel arrangements.

4. Demand from large groups and critical workers is also strong over the summer period. Large groups confirmed for MIQ entry in January include the Recognised Seasonal Employer (RSE) workers, the second tranche of Russian and Ukrainian fishermen and personnel for the United States Antarctica Programme.
5. Immigration New Zealand's best estimate is that around 7% of MIQ rooms are currently being used by critical workers and this is estimated to increase to above 10% in 2021 given estimated demand.
6. The large volume of emergency allocation applications that MBIE has received for travel over this busy period (1,220) is also indicative of this strong demand. The majority of these have been declined to date on the grounds that they do not meet the strict criteria for emergency travel. An expansion of the eligibility criteria¹ will enable a larger number of these applications to be approved in the future. Around 150 rooms will be made available for emergency allocations per fortnight on an ongoing basis, with ongoing review of whether this is adequate.
7. The unavailability of spaces in MIAS to book until mid-February suggests that New Zealanders are currently needing to wait on average just over two months to receive a place in managed isolation. Legal professional privilege

Measures have been introduced to maximise room utilisation and alleviate current pressures on the MIQ system

8. To mitigate this risk, and to help maximise room utilisation, we have begun to communicate with individuals who hold more than one MIAS voucher, to try and eliminate 'double-bookings' or 'dead vouchers' in the system.² As these are identified, we are releasing these vouchers back online for other travellers to book or to use for emergency allocations.
9. Past behaviour has indicated that people who book their vouchers on MIAS do not always arrive at the border on schedule, if at all. To account for these expected 'no-shows,' MBIE generates slightly more vouchers on MIAS than room capacity set aside for online allocations.
10. Continued uncertainty from the airline industry around future schedules prevents at the moment proactive release of vouchers online beyond two-three months. We are, however, making every effort to release places onto MIAS for travellers to book as soon as we receive scheduling information, allowing a greater number of travellers to plan ahead. MIQ is also working closely with airlines to minimise disruptions to travellers when scheduling changes are made.
11. In addition, we are continuing to refine and improve the way our managed isolation facilities operate and manage our capacity. Improvements include ensuring arrivals are allocated to facilities in more manageable groups (40-70), which allows cleaning staff to turn the rooms around faster and improve room availability.
12. Future improvements will also come following planned IT enhancements to the MIAS, which will enable a proportion of places in MIAS to be set aside and made only available to New Zealanders.

¹ Effective from 4 December 2020.

² These can occur, for example, when someone holds a MIAS voucher but has no confirmed flight, or where we know a flight has been cancelled.

Limited MIQ planning capability and room availability will constrain group arrivals until late March 2021

13. The present pressure on our MIQ facilities means we are unable to facilitate the arrival of any new large groups until sometime in late March.
14. Our ability to accommodate groups is not just limited by 'available rooms', it also relates to our ability to logistically plan for, and provide services for groups. We need to ensure that we can continue to provide MIQ services within safe operational limits as well as meet our legal obligations to New Zealanders seeking to return home over this period.
15. Many large groups often require additional services due to their characteristics (such as RSE workers, where language and cultural differences will require extra support) or bespoke arrangements (such as sports teams).
16. Three high-needs large groups will be the focus of MIQ planning between mid-January and – mid-February, with considerable MIQ resource being directed to facilitate the arrival of 227 Russian and Ukrainian fishermen, 2,000 RSE workers, and approximately 210 refugees (likely in tranches of 60-70). As such there will only be limited MIQ resource available to provide MIQ facilitation or bespoke arrangements to other high-needs groups during this period, such as sports teams.

Changes are underway to increase MIQ charges for critical workers

17. Critical workers and temporary visa holders that enter New Zealand on a border exception are liable for MIQ charges. Cabinet has directed officials to make employers liable for a higher level of cost for MIQ services for their critical workers staying in MIQ and that these fees should be paid upfront. Changes to the existing MIQ fee regulations are proposed in order to make employers or sponsoring agencies liable to pay \$4,800 plus GST per person for critical workers and any partners or dependent children (3 years or older) who accompany them [Aide Memoire 201-1681 'MIQ Charges for Critical Workers' refers]. We are not intending to make any changes to the fees settings for critical health workers at this point in time.
18. It is proposed that the new fee settings for critical workers will commence on 1 January 2021 and apply to all critical workers who arrive in New Zealand after that date.
19. Separately, officials have briefed you on a proposed user-pays model to recover costs for bespoke services (e.g. access to training facilities by sports teams) over and above the standard flat MIQ fee per person [Briefing 2021-1598 of 7 December refers]. If you and the Minister of Finance agree to the recommendations in that paper then the proposed cost recovery approach would apply to decisions taken for the Summer of Cricket proposal and the Constellation Cup.

Class Exceptions: MIQ Comments

20. The Ministerial Group is expected to convene on 9 December and will consider a number of new proposals:
 - a. Kāinga Ora housing project
 - b. Tourism New Zealand International Media programme (includes the Stephen Colbert proposal)
 - c. 1,000 Masters and Bachelors international students
 - d. Cargo crew servicing the Pacific

- e. Replacement international fishing crew – addition to the programmes list
- f. America's cup – superyachts to watch various events
- g. Visitors for commemoration events (e.g. Christchurch earthquake, Christchurch Mosque Attacks, Whakaari White Island)
- h. Sports events - the "Summer of Cricket" proposal, the Constellation Cup, and the Toyota racing series

We can accommodate some of these groups from February onwards...

- 21. As noted above, as MIQ will be operating at near full occupancy early next year and our available resource is already committed to facilitating three high-needs groups (RSE workers, Russian and Ukrainian fishermen and refugees) during this period, we are severely constrained in what we can do safely within operational limits [Aide Memoire 2021-1507 'Implementing the RSE Border Class Exception: MIQ Resourcing Impacts' refers].
- 22. Typically, per fortnight, MIQ can safely accommodate two or three groups with bespoke requirements – split between Christchurch and Auckland. These centres are well-resourced to provide the wraparound services these groups often require. As RSE workers and refugees will be accommodated in Auckland between mid-January to March, this only leaves Christchurch to accommodate any groups with bespoke needs over this period.
- 23. On balance, we judge that small groups with a minor MIQ impact (i.e. groups who require no, or very little, additional support) could be accommodated in Christchurch from February, should their arrival be staggered. Proposals on the table that fit this profile, include:
 - a. the Stephen Colbert proposal (26),
 - b. visitors for the Christchurch commemorative events (likely to be less than 50), and
 - c. the owners of competing America's Cup yachts (eight plus family members).
- 24. While Senior Officials have recommended to approve in principle the Colbert proposal on the basis of significant promotional benefits to New Zealand, should the class exception be approved by Ministers, MIQ Operations and the Ministry of Health would still need to undertake a detailed operational risk assessment and health risk assessment to determine whether the bespoke MIQ requirements sought (bubble access to each other and filming while in MIQ) could be safely accommodated.

...however, trade-offs will need to be made as there is a risk of displacement for returning New Zealanders and critical workers

- 25. While we can accommodate a small number of groups in February, most other proposals over this period cannot be accommodated due to capacity and other operational constraints.
- 26. All of the sports teams wanting to enter MIQ over January-February are asking for bespoke MIQ arrangements such as access to training facilities. Given that RSE workers and refugees will draw heavily on MIQ resources during this time, **we cannot accommodate all of these sports teams** (although one sports team may be possible – see comments below).
- 27. From an operational perspective, MIQ could accommodate one sports team in late February drawing on the 500 rooms that have been temporarily set aside to accommodate group arrivals (e.g. RSE workers) [Briefing 2021-1657 on 'Large Group Arrivals in Early 2021' refers]. However, due to current significant delays experienced by New Zealanders and a number of critical workers unable to enter New Zealand at this time (due to the lack of online MIAS vouchers), we suggest these rooms are placed on MIAS for general booking.

28.

Legal professional privilege

29. Detailed MIQ comments on the operational feasibility of each proposal is outlined in Annex One.

Cabinet paper – Improvements to room allocations

30. You have agreed to lodge a Cabinet paper on improvements to the allocation of managed isolation rooms. This paper is scheduled to be considered by Cabinet on 14 December. The paper seeks agreement to implement the following improved regulatory and operational tools for allocating managed isolation rooms and facilitating entry into New Zealand:

- an operational target for 10 per cent of allocable managed isolation rooms to be used by critical workers;
- ring fencing 75 per cent of allocable rooms solely for use by New Zealanders, protecting their legal right to return home; and
- establishing a transparent legal basis for prioritising and allocating rooms to people entitled to enter and whose entry is time-critical.



Annex One: MIQ comments on new class exceptions

Large Group	Number	Date of arrival	Additional support needed	Senior Officials Group Advice	MIQ Comments
<i>Groups that are likely to be manageable from an MIQ operational perspective</i>					
Infrastructure - Kainga Ora Build Urban Development programme	20	From now, staggered arrival.	No. This is not a high-needs group	Approve	Manageable from an MIQ perspective, but only from mid-February onwards when MIAS vouchers are available. Once visas confirmed, workers should use MIAS or apply for an emergency allocation (if they need to enter before mid-Feb).
Superyachts – owners of America’s cup yachts	8 owners and their families	TBC	No	Approve	We understand that these individuals will want to self-isolate on their yachts. Should the owners arrive by air, this would require an exemption from MIQ which would unlikely be approved. This means that the owners would need to go through standard MIQ facilities for 14 days. Should the owners arrive at the maritime border, then self-isolation on board their yachts may be possible, as long as the craft can meet health/customs requirements.
Replacement crews on approved international shipping vessels	50 persons every six months	From December onwards	Yes (transport and testing)	Approve – Officials recommend a cap of 50 persons every six months.	MIQ would be responsible for the transfer of crew from airport to port. Testing of all maritime crew is shortly to be introduced as well.

Large Group	Number	Date of arrival	Additional support needed	Senior Officials Group Advice	MIQ Comments
					Expectations will need to be managed due to MIQ operational capacity and logistical constraints during the first part of next year.
Visitors for commemoration events (ie Christchurch Earthquake, Christchurch Mosque Attack, Whakaari White Island)	50 (estimate)	1-5 February 22-25 February 18-22 November	Yes – may need victim and pastoral support	Approve	Yes, likely to be manageable. There are also rooms currently available in MIAS for mid-February.
International Students and their families (Returning Bachelors' and Masters' degree students)	1000 + eligible family	From April onwards	No	Approve	Entry of students into MIQ should be staggered and timing of first entry to avoid the period of heavy demand on our facilities early next year i.e. staggered entry from April onwards preferred. Students would have to book places via MIAS like other travellers when there are places available.
Tourism NZ International Strategic Media programme	200 media	First 26 persons in February (Stephen Colbert + film crew)	Yes	Approve Colbert proposal and defer decision on the rest of media programme	MIQ almost fully booked until mid-February. MIQ spaces only available from late February. Late February arrival therefore would be preferred. From a room availability perspective the crew could be accommodated at this time. However, the film crew want to film while in MIQ and want bubble access to each other. This would require a specific health exemption from MoH. A detailed operational risk assessment by MBIE MIQ and health risk

Large Group	Number	Date of arrival	Additional support needed	Senior Officials Group Advice	MIQ Comments
					<p>assessment by MoH would therefore need to be undertaken to determine whether any bespoke MIQ arrangements could be accommodated safely. There is no guarantee that these bespoke MIQ arrangements would be approved.</p> <p>If other media (200) have no special requirements entry could be staggered over 2021. This group will need to book and secure their places in managed isolation via MIAS.</p>
<i>MIQ manageable, but not recommended from an MIQ perspective</i>					
Cargo crew servicing the Pacific	200 in total	First 100 in January	No	Approve	<p>Unclear whether alternatives to MIQ, such as testing, have been sufficiently explored. We could not likely accommodate 100 arrivals in January as there is currently no room availability in MIAS.</p> <p>Would be manageable if group entry is staggered and timed to avoid peak season of demand on MIQ early next year i.e. entry preferred from late Feb onwards. Should be directed to use MIAS to book their places in MIQ like other travellers when there is availability.</p>

Large Group	Number	Date of arrival	Additional support needed	Senior Officials Group Advice	MIQ Comments
<i>Groups that will likely heavily draw on available MIQ resource or timing of entry is problematic and probably not be manageable</i>					
Americas Cup - super yachts to watch Americas cup events	40-50	December - March	Yes	Decline	Draw-down on MIQ resources in terms of transporting to yachts and testing.
Superyachts – owners of yachts being refitted/refurbished	TBC	TBC	Yes	Decline	Draw-down on MIQ resources in terms of transporting to yachts and testing, as well as potential stay in MIQ facilities.
Australian Women's Netball Team – Constellation Cup	30	Late January / early February. Arrival date of 20 Jan preferred. Have indicated a degree of flexibility.	Yes – want bespoke training arrangements consistent with that agreed for the Roses.	Decline	No room availability in MIAS until mid-February. Bespoke services would be required to facilitate the group's special needs. These would be extremely difficult to meet while RSE workers are going through MIQ at the same time.
Cricket English Women's Cricket Team	28	31 January	Yes – want bespoke training arrangements	Decline	No room availability in MIAS until mid-February. As per other sports teams wanting to come through MIQ during this period, bespoke services would be required to facilitate the group's special needs. These would be extremely difficult to meet while RSE workers are going through MIQ at the same time.
Men's cricket teams	100 in total	In groups of 30-40 from late January to March (England / Australia and Bangladesh)	Yes – want bespoke training arrangements	Decline	No room availability in MIAS until mid-February. As per other sports teams wanting to come through MIQ during this period, bespoke services would be required to facilitate team needs. These would be extremely difficult to meet while RSE workers are going through MIQ at the same time.
Toyota Racing Series	50	Mid-late January	No	Decline	No room availability in January when this group wants to come in. No room availability until mid-February.

Daily MIAS Room Utilisation Chart - Incl Estimated Operational Impacts (approved groups)

