



AIDE MEMOIRE

New Voucher Release Framework

Date:	24 March 2021	Priority:	Medium
Security classification:		Tracking number:	2021-2954

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	Policy Manager, Allocation and Supply, MIQ Policy	Privacy of natural persons	✓
	Senior Policy Advisor		

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 Withdrawn |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

I'm broadly comfortable with the approach but would prefer the advance release is more like 40% rather than 60%. We still have decisions to make about overall MIQ capacity as the TTSTZ opens, and the possibility of de-commissioning some MIF facilities if they aren't appropriate longer term remains on the table. CH



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Purpose

To advise you of a new approach to voucher releases in the Managed Isolation Allocation System (MIAS), which will allow travellers to secure vouchers up to six months in advance. Talking points (in **Annex One**) have been provided should you wish to update Cabinet.

Privacy of natural persons

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Manager, Allocation and Supply
MIQ Policy, MBIE
24 /03 / 2020

Background

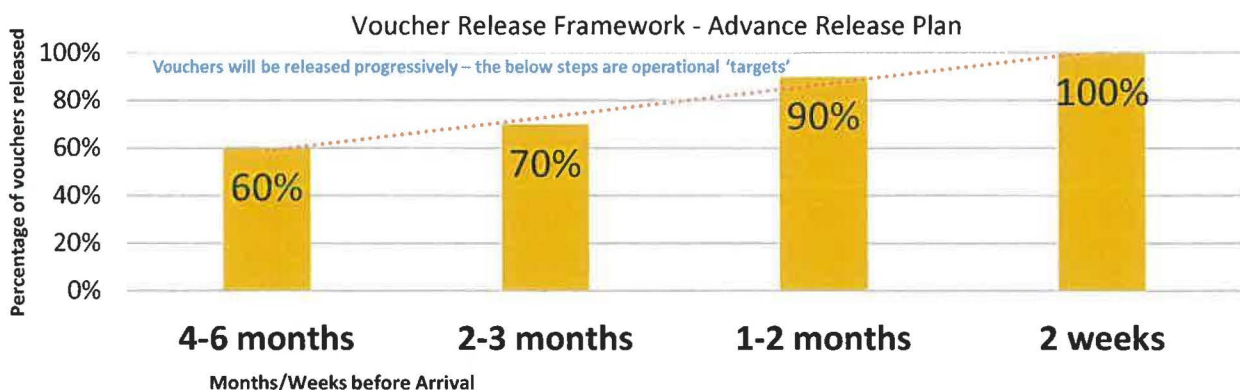
1. Returnees require a voucher confirming their space in managed isolation in order to board a flight to New Zealand. For most travellers these vouchers are obtained using MIAS, which until fairly recently, gave travellers a narrow booking window in which to secure their vouchers.
2. MIAS relies on accurate flight information with vouchers being linked to flights. To secure a voucher travellers are required to confirm their flight details in MIAS.
3. To facilitate this, airlines advise us of their confirmed flight schedules, which we then upload into MIAS. MBIE only loads flight data once we are confident of its reliability.
4. Due to the pandemic, airline flight schedules more than three months out have typically proved unreliable and susceptible to change.
5. A three month booking window was therefore originally set in MIAS to minimise the need for travellers to have to apply to MBIE to obtain a new voucher should their flight(s) change after booking. Thereby reducing the amount of rework for MIQ as well as stress for travellers.

Close work with airlines is enabling us to extend the MIAS booking horizon...

- Airlines publish six monthly schedules in line with global notification requirements. The two schedule periods are April-October (Northern Summer), and November-March (Northern Winter).
- To protect historic landing slots, many airlines have continued to publish full schedules, despite the unlikelihood that many of these flights will proceed in the present environment.
- MBIE has worked extensively over the past three months with each of the 15+ airlines servicing New Zealand to obtain and load more 'reliable' flight data into MIAS, making allowances for this practice by airlines.
- This work, along with a commitment from airlines to provide more realistic schedules, recently allowed MBIE to load rooms into MIAS out to 31 July 2021, extending the booking horizon to four months.
- Next month, MBIE intends to load known schedules out to 31 October 2021 to complete the current Northern Summer schedule season (April-October). This will extend the booking horizon in MIAS even further, allowing travellers to book their vouchers up to six months in advance.

...and release more vouchers over a longer time frame for travellers to book

- Although the booking horizon will increase to six months in MIAS, MBIE will not release all vouchers available for this period online at once. Vouchers will be subject to a staggered release (see chart below), with 60% of vouchers for a given period available upfront and the remaining 40% released gradually. The last 10% would be released two weeks prior to arrival.
- A graduated release of vouchers over time should help even out demand and reduce the likelihood of demand spikes overwhelming our systems. However, it is highly likely that demand for MIQ space will continue to outstrip supply.



- Some degree of risk mitigation (by holding back some vouchers in reserve for release at a later date) is necessary to permit MBIE the operational flexibility to reduce room capacity should we need to implement any new policy changes or deal with any unexpected issues that might substantially impact on capacity.

New approach will see greater benefits for travellers, airlines and MBIE

- The clear advantage of this new approach is a reduction in stress for travellers who will be able to forward plan and obtain their vouchers early. It similarly provides greater surety for organisations needing to recruit critical workers from overseas as they often need a guaranteed MIQ spot for their workers in order to be able to finalise contractual arrangements.

15. For airlines, a more proactive approach to voucher releases will enable them to confirm their flights more easily in advance, with passengers more likely to book flights if they have a greater chance of securing an MIQ voucher.
16. A substantial increase to the number of vouchers available early online to book will assist MBIE with demand forecasting. Better and more accurate forecasts will improve our ability to plan ahead and manage the flow of incoming arrivals as well as maximise room utilisation across the MIQ system. MBIE also expects to see a reduction in the volume of frivolous emergency allocation applications. With more vouchers available online early for travellers to book, as well as some vouchers being released just one month out, there will be less of a need for frustrated travellers to try and obtain a MIAS voucher through this pathway.
17. MBIE officials have had in-confidence discussions with Business NZ about these changes. Business New Zealand were strongly supportive of a longer booking time horizon in MIAS. MBIE has agreed to work with Business NZ on communications that can be distributed to their members, alerting them to the upcoming changes and increased ability to book ahead in MIAS. MBIE will also look to update our key messages on the MIAS website once the new voucher release framework is implemented.

Annexes

Annex One: Talking Points

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In summary, this section contains Talking Points that were a summation of information being released in this paper. The Talking Points were prepared and offered by MBIE/MIQ, but they do not necessarily represent messages that the Minister for Covid-19 Response accepted or ever used.