



## AIDE MEMOIRE

### Talking points for Meeting 7 of the Border Exceptions Ministerial Group

<b>Date:</b>	31 May 2021	<b>Priority:</b>	High
<b>Security classification:</b>		<b>Tracking number:</b>	2021-3982

<b>Information for Minister(s)</b>
Hon Chris Hipkins <b>Minister for COVID-19 Response</b>

<b>Contact for telephone discussion (if required)</b>				
Name	Position	Telephone		1st contact
Privacy of natural persons	Manager, Allocation and Supply			✓
	Senior Policy Advisor, Allocation and Supply	Privacy of natural persons		

<b>The following departments/agencies have been consulted</b>

**Minister's office to complete:**

Approved

Declined

Noted

Needs change

Seen

Overtaken by Events

See Minister's Notes

Withdrawn

**Comments**



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#### Purpose

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To provide you with relevant background on the group allocation, out-of-cycle group request, the Trans-Tasman transit border exception, and talking points to support discussion at the Border Exceptions Ministerial Group meeting on 1 June 2021.

Privacy of natural persons

**Manager, Allocation and Supply**  
MIQ Policy, MBIE

31 / 5 / 21

#### Items for discussion at meeting

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1. You are chairing the Border Exceptions Ministerial Group at its next meeting, 1 June 2021.
2. You received a briefing with information on all key items being discussed at the meeting on 28 May [briefing 2021-3654 refers]. We have also provided the meeting agenda in Annex 3. The meeting is primarily focused on a number of small-scale border exceptions. These groups will book via MIAS and are not seeking a group allocation. MIQ supports the decisions being sought for items 1-8 that relate to border exceptions.
3. On 28 May, you agreed to updated groups criteria and confirmed the process for considering allocation requests in packages at regular intervals [briefing 2021-3639 refers].
4. The next packages meeting will be held in early July and you have agreed that no group allocation requests will be approved before then [briefing 2021-3770 refers]. However, we believe it is possible portfolio ministers will raise particular requests at Tuesday's meeting. Talking points on the group allocations process are attached at Annex One. A summary of the out-of-cycle requests we are aware of is included at Annex Two.

#### Crankworx (not currently on the agenda)

5. MBIE Major Events have submitted a request to Minister Nash increase their group allocation (agreed at the previous packages meeting) from 70 to 183 people. They have stated that the

event will not be commercially viable unless the group allocation is increased. MIQ was not consulted on this proposal. There are no remaining rooms in the group allocation for this request.

6. The size of this request was determined based on information provided by Crankworx in the lead-up to the Border Exceptions Ministerial Group on 19 April. The packages were prepared on 9 April and sent to ministers; Crankworx did not update the size of their request until after the packages were prepared.
7. This request should be considered an out-of-cycle group allocation request, which you have agreed not to consider. Furthermore, there is currently good availability in MIAS for October. As Crankworx participants are not travelling as a single unit and do not have bespoke requirements, they should not be accommodated through the groups process when MIAS vouchers are available to them.

### **Item 8: Possible approaches to utilise MIQ capacity**

8. You are leading an agenda item on changing the approach to border exceptions, moving from only highly targeted border exceptions to exceptions that are wider in nature. You received advice about this approach on 18 May [briefing 2021-3102 refers].

### **Trans-Tasman transit**

9. You received an Aide Memoire from the Border Executive Board on the creation of a border exception to facilitate trans-Tasman transit for travellers who need to enter New Zealand to travel to Australia. Australia has agreed to facilitate the MIQ of 30 people per month who need to enter Australia to reach New Zealand on the basis that New Zealand would set up a reciprocal arrangement.
10. These travellers would not have a specified MIQ allocation and would be expected to book through MIAS. At present, demand for MIQ is low enough that travellers would not struggle to book their own travel. However, if demand for MIQ increases (for instance, as we enter the Christmas/summer period), it may prove more difficult for travellers to secure their own travel. MFAT has advised that there is no expectation from Australia that rooms are manually allocated.

## **Annexes**

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Annex One: Talking points

Annex Two: List of potential out-of-cycle decision requests

Annex Three: Meeting agenda

## Annex One: Talking points

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### MIQ capacity

- There continues to be good availability on MIAS, with MIQ experiencing a period of underutilisation. However, with the introduction of cohorting and a number of facilities undergoing maintenance over the quieter winter period, capacity has also decreased slightly.
- The group allocation is **fully allocated until the end of October**, although there have been some issues with groups entering on their agreed dates which has resulted in spaces being released on MIAS.
- MIAS vouchers have been released online to the end of October.

### Updated groups criteria

- I have agreed to some changes to the group allocation criteria to ensure it stays fit for purpose. Groups will continue to need a sponsoring agency and to be considered a government priority. They must need more than 20 rooms to be considered through this pathway, and they must need to arrive as a single unit unless there is no reasonable alternative.
- This provides a bit more flexibility than the previous criteria, but I want to reiterate my expectation that **other pathways should be considered before group allocation requests are made**. For example, if MIAS vouchers are available, groups should in the first instance seek to book on MIAS, or use the existing 'name hold' or 'name swap' options.
- The intent of the group allocation is to support groups with complex needs, such as language or training needs, who should not book through MIAS.

### Next decision meeting

- I have brought the next decision-making meeting for group allocation forward from late July to early July. I know a number of you have groups that need a decision as soon as possible.
- In light of the likely demand and the constrained number of allocable rooms, we need to have all of the information about group requests in front of us to prioritise and make decisions on how to allocate space.
- Officials have advised me that bringing this meeting any further forward is inadvisable, as agencies need time to provide robust information to MIQ officials. The better the quality of information is at the start, the smoother this process runs and MIQ and incoming travellers.
- It is likely demand for MIQ will increase over the summer months, which means it's critical for us to make strategic choices about how to use space in MIQ. We have fewer spaces to assign as RSE workers and refugees have ongoing allocations taking up around 200 of the 400 group spaces.

### Progress on current packages round

- The June-October group allocation package is currently being implemented. Officials have reported to me that there have been some difficulties in implementing these allocation decisions, largely because of poor information at the early planning stages and sectors' not being organised.

- For instance:
  - The Construction Sector Accord has not been able to use any of its 60 spaces in June
  - Only four of a planned 100 international students will entered in June, and 15 are currently scheduled to enter in July
  - The earliest entry of RSE workers has been pushed back at least two weeks from the industry's proposed start date
  - Crankworx wants to more than double the size of its agreed group allocation in October.

## **Crankworx**

- I note the request from Crankworx to increase their allocation from 70 to 183 participants. Unfortunately, my officials were not advised of the increase to their request until after the packages for the June-October period had been prepared.
- We agreed in April that significant changes to group allocations need to be considered by the whole Border Exceptions Ministerial Group. As I have already noted, the group allocation is full until the end of October and no further groups can be accommodated.
- I was not pleased to see that Crankworx has submitted a request to increase the size of their allocation in October without engaging MIQ officials.
- There are MIAS vouchers available online for October. Given Crankworx does not meet the group allocation criteria, they should be seeking to book vouchers for their participants in the first instance.

## **Item 8: Possible approaches to utilise MIQ capacity**

- Up until now, we have deliberately ensured that the border exceptions we agree are targeted to the amount of capacity we have in MIQ to accommodate additional travellers. This has helped to ensure that MIQ is first and foremost there to enable New Zealanders to come home.
- However, we are now facing the opportunity to make some strategic choices about how we utilise MIQ space, as we see falling demand for rooms as well as growing capabilities in how MIQ manages bookings.
- One option we can consider is to make changes to immigration settings that are broader and simpler, relying on a greater ability to “queue” non-New Zealanders in times of high demand.
- Officials have set out some of the benefits and trade-offs this approach would entail.

## Annex Two: Potential out-of-cycle decision requests

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	<b>When</b>	<b>Number of rooms requested</b>	<b>Bespoke needs/complexity</b>
Crankworx	October 2021	Approx. 113 additional (granted 70 spaces in the April package)	Does not meet group criteria - not travelling/arriving as a single unit
Deepsea mariners	September 2021	400-600	Translation/interpretation needs, high levels of smokers
Travellers returning from Dubai Expo	November 2021 onwards	358	No
US and European Antarctic Programmes	November 2021 onwards	Approx. 500	No
Rugby union/rugby league teams	November 2021	238	No
Cricket World Cup	Jan/Feb 2022	155	Off-site training, some likely to be from very high risk countries

**Annex Three: Meeting agenda**

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Border Exception Ministers – meeting 7  
Tuesday 1 June, 4:00pm – 5:00pm, Room 2.1 Executive Wing

**Chair:** Hon Hipkins  
**Attending:** Hons Sepuloni, Woods, Nash, Jackson, Mahuta and O'Connor.  
Departing at 3.30pm: Hons O'Connor, Jackson and Nash.  
**Apologies:** Hons Faafoi, Parker

**Border exception requests for agreement by Border Exception Ministers**

**Item 1: Dairy Farm workers**

- Hon O'Connor invited to discuss his request

*Ministerial Group invited to decide recommendations f and g.*

**Item 2: Veterinarians**

- Hon O'Connor invited to discuss his request

*Ministerial Group invited to decide recs h and i.*

**Item 3: Early childhood, primary and secondary teachers**

- Hon Hipkins invited to discuss his request

*Ministerial Group invited to decide recommendations c, d, e and w.*

**Item 4: Australians transiting New Zealand**

- Hon Mahuta invited to discuss her request

*Ministerial Group invited to decide recommendations o and p.*

**Item 5: Replacement cargo crew servicing the Pacific**

- Hon Mahuta invited to discuss her request

*Ministerial Group invited to decide recommendation q.*

**Item 6: Replacement crew for foreign-flagged fishing vessels**

- Hon Mahuta invited to discuss her request

*Ministerial Group invited to decide recommendations r and s.*

**Next steps for agreement by Border Exceptions Ministers**

**Item 7: Decisions deferred to next meeting**

- Hon Hipkins (Acting Chair of the Group) invited to seek the Group's agreement to deferral of items

*Ministerial Group invited to defer consideration relating to the Deep Sea fishing crew draft request at recommendations j, k, l, m and n until Hon Parker is able to attend to discuss this item.*

**Item 8: Possible underutilisation of MIQ capacity**

- Hon Hipkins (Acting Chair of the Group) invited to seek the Group's comments

*Ministerial Group invited to comment in regard to the possible future approach for emerging underutilisation at recommendations y and z.*

**Item 9: Cabinet confirmation of these decisions by the Ministerial Group**

- Hon Hipkins (Acting Chair of the Group) invited to seek the Group's agreement to the next steps

*Ministerial Group invited to note recommendation aa.*