



## AIDE MEMOIRE

### Use of Wellington managed isolation facilities for groups

<b>Date:</b>	30 April 2021	<b>Priority:</b>	Medium
<b>Security classification:</b>		<b>Tracking number:</b>	2021-3496

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

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

<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Withdrawn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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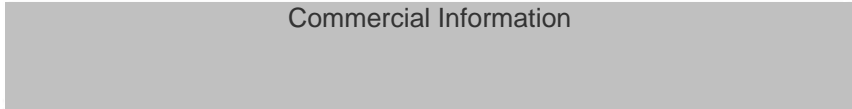
### Purpose

To inform you why Wellington managed isolation facilities (MIFs) have not been progressed as an MIQ option for accommodating Regional Seasonal Employer (RSE) workers or cohorts of international students.

Kara Isaac  
General Manager  
MIQ Policy, MBIE

30 / 4 / 21

### Wellington suitability for ongoing MIQ

1. In mid-April we provided you with advice on the difficulties Wellington region is facing in utilising its managed isolation capacity [2021-3193 refers]:
  - a. the requirement for physical 'red' and 'green' zone separation at passenger terminals meant that the shared arrangement at the NZDF Rongotai Air Movements terminal, which utilises slots and cleaning in between NZDF and MIQ movements, could not continue beyond Monday 19 April,
  - b. Wellington International Airport will not allow MIQ to use its passenger terminal or baggage handling facilities under any circumstances,
  - c. passenger processing facilities at the NZDF Rongotai Air Movements terminal limit the number of people who can be processed per flight in a safe and timely manner to approximately 60 people at one time,
  - d. difficulties with continuing a safe, reliable and cost-effective coach service to transfer returnees to the facilities,
  - e. facility limitations, including:
    - i. limited capacity of Wellington MIFs (152 rooms total),
    - ii.  Commercial Information
2. The issue of 'red' and 'green' flight separation was resolved by Cabinet agreeing to exempt NZDF Rongotai Air Movements from this requirement [CAB-21-MIN-0139 refers]. An IPC

audit of Rongotai terminal was carried out on 29 April. This confirmed that international flights direct to Wellington are not possible due to the lack of Customs and Immigration staff at the terminal, and that size of domestic transfers remain at 60 people.

3. We advised you on 14 April that if the entry of RSE workers could not be brought forward from July to June, we would provide further advice about decommissioning the Wellington MIFs [briefing 2021-3193 refers]. However, despite plans being underway to bring these dates forward, further work has determined that Wellington is not the best place to accommodate these cohorts.

### Operational challenges

4. The earliest possible date MIQ could accommodate RSE workers is 20 June. This constraint is not related to system capacity but due to the time necessary to stand up appropriate health and wraparound support for RSE workers.
5. Due to NZDF Rongotai Air Movements terminal constraints, the maximum size of a group that may arrive in Wellington is 60 individuals at one time. This is less than half of what the horticulture sector has stated is the minimum commercially viable number for running a charter flight. Filling Wellington with 150 RSE workers would require three charter flight transfers, significantly increasing the cost to the horticulture sector of bringing in their workers. MIQ is currently charged Commercial Information per domestic charter flight.
6. In addition, the two Wellington MIFs (Grand Mercure and the Bay Plaza) cannot accommodate twin-share rooms, which would further increase the cost per worker. In total, the cost of single rooms, additional cost recovery and charter flights to Wellington would be around \$2.1 million per month (see Annex 1 for table of costs). The sector has already raised concerns about financial viability and would be unlikely to support this proposal.
7. The third key challenge of hosting RSE workers in Wellington is ensuring the necessary wraparound services are in place and sustainable for the long term. In particular, Pasifika-specific welfare support and translators/interpreters may be more difficult to find in Wellington than Auckland or Hamilton owing to the size of the local Pasifika community.

### Benefits of using Wellington MIFs for RSE workers

8. Using Wellington MIFs for RSE workers would allow full utilisation of the Commercial Information Commercial Information with returnees from high risk countries or full capacity with returnees from 'low risk countries' (defined as those arriving from Australia or the Pacific). It would offer a reliable way of maintaining capacity in Wellington.
9. In addition, Capital and Coast DHB is under the least pressure of DHBs supporting managed isolation facilities, and therefore is in the best position to support RSE workers. Based on previous experience, we expect these workers to have higher medical needs than standard returnees, requiring additional healthcare support from health practitioners.

### Use of Hamilton MIFs for RSE workers

10. Following analysis of all MIQ locations, MIQ Operations has concluded Hamilton is best placed to host RSE workers. It is close enough to Auckland to allow for bus transfer (which is included in the standard MIQ fees), large enough to process cohorts of 150 at a time, and has good pre-existing welfare support, including specialised Pasifika welfare services.
11. Other regions were considered and rejected for the reasons outlined in the below table. Christchurch was the next best option, and will act as a contingency region should problems arise with accommodating RSE workers in Hamilton.

### Drawbacks of other regions

Auckland	Christchurch	Rotorua
Pressure on healthcare workforce  Reluctance of previous RSE facilities to host more RSE workers	Primary location for other groups (sports teams, Antarctic programmes)  Difficulty sourcing wraparound support (translation, pastoral care)	Distance from airport  Distance from tertiary hospital facility  Difficulty sourcing wraparound support (translation, pastoral care)

### Use of Wellington MIFs by students

12. You have also requested information on the suitability of Wellington MIFs to host cohorts of international students. The Ministry of Education (MoE) is working with MIQ to arrange group allocations for groups of students arriving together over June and early July. We also understand some students are booking via MIAS. The first students have already entered MIQ, with more arriving throughout May.
13. These students are arriving from China and the first cohorts are likely to be travelling together on commercial flights and arriving into Auckland. Due to the size of the proposed cohorts (around 50 people), transfer to Wellington would be possible, however separating students out from other travellers on the same flight for MIQ would provide limited benefit in terms of managing risk. MoE has advised that charter flights are unlikely to be pursued due to cost and logistical challenges.
14. Travellers from China are still required to undergo pre-departure COVID testing and are therefore considered high-risk travellers by the Ministry of Health. This means they could only fill the Commercial Information  
Commercial Information
15. Unlike RSE workers, international students are unlikely to have complex needs requiring additional MIQ support. From a planning perspective, there is no need for them to go into a designated facility, and it will cost more overall to transfer them into Wellington regardless of availability elsewhere in New Zealand.
16. For these reasons, we do not advise that cohorts of students are assigned to the Wellington region for their MIQ.

### Annexes

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17. Annex One: Table of costs for RSE workers

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### Standard MIQ fees

Location	Per month (300 workers)
Wellington (single rooms only)	\$1,440,000
Hamilton (single and twin-share)	\$1,290,400

### Additional cost recovery

Item	Per month
Bottled water (1L bottles)	\$8,400
Additional Food	\$42,000
Face-to-face interpreters Based on last RSE requirement, depending on language specialty, relocation, duration, etc.	\$100,000 (to 150,000)
Pasifika Wellbeing coordinator (Pastoral care incl.)	\$26,880
Welfare pack (Phone, Prezzy card)	\$150,000
Communications and Collateral - Printing (cannot be re-used by other RSEs) - Translation / rush translation - Video production	\$5,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$332,280</b>
<b>Total excluding Welfare Pack</b>	<b>\$182,280</b>

### Charter flights

Location	Per month
Hamilton	-
Wellington	\$330,000

### Total monthly cost (inc Welfare Pack)

Wellington	<b>\$2,102,280</b>
Hamilton	<b>\$1,622,680</b>

