



BRIEFING

Final operational plan for the self-isolation pilot

Date:	22 October 2021	Priority:	High
Security classification:		Tracking number:	2122-1398

Action sought		
	Action sought	Deadline
Hon Chris Hipkins Minister for COVID-19 Response	Approve the final operational plan for the self-isolation pilot. Agree that if Ministers make any changes to the length of the standard MIQ stay, then the length of the self-isolation pilot will reduce accordingly.	26 October 2021

Contact for telephone discussion (if required)			
Name	Position	Telephone	1st contact
Christina Sophocleous-Jones	General Manager, Self-Isolation Pilot	Privacy of natural persons	✓

The following departments/agencies have been consulted
Ministry of Health

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 Withdrawn |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



BRIEFING

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Purpose

To seek your approval of the final operational plan for the self-isolation pilot, and your agreement that if Ministers make any changes to the length of the standard MIQ stay, then the length of the self-isolation pilot will reduce accordingly.

Recommended action

The Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment (MBIE) recommends that you:

- a **Approve** the final operational plan for the self-isolation pilot.

Yes / No

- b **Agree** that if Ministers make any changes to the length of the standard MIQ stay (currently 14 days), then the length of the self-isolation pilot will reduce accordingly.

Agree / Disagree

- c **Note** that the full design of the self-isolation pilot will not be scalable beyond the pilot due to the constraints of the public health advice which informed Cabinet's decisions.

Noted

- d **Agree** to proactively release this briefing with any withholdings consistent with the Official Information Act 1982.

Agree / Disagree

Christina Sophocleous-Jones
General Manager, Self-Isolation Pilot
Managed Isolation and Quarantine, MBIE

22 / 10 / 2021

Hon Chris Hipkins
Minister for COVID-19 Response

29 / 10 / 21
..... / /

Background

1. On 27 September, Cabinet agreed to the design parameters of the self-isolation pilot [CAB-21-MIN-0386 refers]. Cabinet also agreed that final operational plans for the pilot be approved by you.
2. On 8 October, you took further decisions on operational design matters [MBIE-BR-2122-1284 refers]. On 14 October, you agreed to the COVID-19 Public Health Response (Isolation and Quarantine) Amendment Order (No 3) 2021 to give legal effect to the self-isolation pilot [MBIE-BR-2122-1338 refers]. Your office has been provided with an update on the results of the ballot, which took place on 12 October.
3. This briefing seeks your approval of the final operational plan for the self-isolation pilot and your agreement that if Ministers make any changes to the length of the standard MIQ stay, then the length of the self-isolation pilot will reduce accordingly..

Key dates

4. The key dates for the pilot are as follows:
 - Successfully balloted applicants advised: 15 October
 - Final date for applicant submission of materials required for confirmation of their inclusion in the pilot: 22 October
 - Participant arrival window into New Zealand: 30 October – 8 December
 - Final participants leave self-isolation: 22 December.

Pre-departure from New Zealand

Final approval of participants

5. In order to obtain final approval to participate in the self-isolation pilot, successfully balloted applicants are required to submit a self-isolation plan. This plan requires applicants to provide a range information, declarations, and consents related to:
 - a) The place of self-isolation (including whether, if temporary rental accommodation is to be used, the owner has agreed to that place being used for self-isolation)
 - b) Emergency health and contact information (eg NHI number, GP details)
 - c) Communications, compliance (with self-isolation and health-related requirements), and monitoring
 - d) Access to food and medications.
6. The Ministry of Health (MOH) will verify applicants' vaccination status, to confirm that they have been fully vaccinated in New Zealand with Cominarty (Pfizer BioTNeCh COVID-19 vaccine).

MIAS vouchers held by participants

7. You decided that applicants who currently hold Managed Isolation Allocation System (MIAS) vouchers are eligible to participate in the self-isolation pilot, so long as their vouchers can be cancelled and released in time for other people to obtain via the MIAS lobby [MBIE-BR-2122-1338 refers]. Any such vouchers will be cancelled on applicants' confirmed acceptance into the self-isolation pilot.

Participant withdrawal from pilot

8. If a participant withdraws from the pilot prior to their departure, MBIE will select the next eligible EOI for that travel period, provided that there is sufficient time for that next applicant to meet the pilot's requirements prior to travel.
9. We are experiencing a high level of withdrawals to date. Out of 140 applicants who were advised last Friday of their provisional participation, 21 have withdrawn to date. Reasons range from being unable to comply with the accommodation requirements, being unwilling to self-isolate away from family members, and travel being more difficult to arrange than expected. An additional 12 applicants were subsequently found to be ineligible for a range of reasons such as visa conditions or wanting to travel with their children.
10. This is a resource intensive process and as time continues it will become less and less likely that people will be able to travel and return within the window available. Every participant who is contacted must be provided with a reasonable window of time to provide their information/evidence so it can take up to 5 business days to confirm their participation or find that they cannot proceed.
11. We will provide your office with an update next week on the number of withdrawals and ineligible participants. We may seek your approval that MIQ is able to set a cut-off date for continuing to contact new participants. It may not be possible to fill the 150 spaces in the pilot if the rate of withdrawals and ineligible participants continues at this level.

Offline allocation of MIAS vouchers to participants

12. Participants will be manually allocated a MIAS voucher offline. The voucher will indicate that the person is a self-isolation pilot participant. An MIQ room will not be allocated to them.

Arrival in New Zealand

Requirements under the COVID-19 Public Health Response (Air Border) Order 2020

13. Under the COVID-19 Public Health Response (Air Border) Order 2020 (the Air Border Order), on arrival in New Zealand participants will be required to:
 - a) Provide evidence of a confirmed allocation
 - b) Provide evidence of a negative pre-departure test
 - c) Undergo medical examination and testing for COVID-19.
14. Day 0 testing will be carried out at the airport and will consist of a nasopharyngeal swab at the airport. Due to space constraints at Christchurch Airport, officials have confirmed the inclusion of a Rapid Antigen Test (RAT) at point of arrival for Auckland participants only. This forms part of the Point of Arrival trial to determine whether RATs can be operationalised at the airports. Participants will be provided with saliva testing kit and given a demonstration of how to use this.
15. If a participant is symptomatic on arrival, or has otherwise breached the conditions of the pilot (eg travelled through a very high risk country), a Medical Officer of Health (MOoH) may require that a person enter MIQ, rather than their place of self-isolation. In this event, the MIQ room would be derived from operational contingency.

Airport processes

16. Participants will disembark an aircraft and move through Auckland and Christchurch Airports as a self-isolation pilot cohort, but will proceed under standard arrival passages and processes for red flights.

17. While participants are at the airport, and in transit to their place of self-isolation, they must maintain physical distancing and wear personal protective equipment (PPE), as required under the Air Border Order.

Transportation to participants' places of self-isolation

18. On exit landside, participants will be directed to transportation (provided by the same company that services MIQ) that will transit them to their places of self-isolation.
19. In transit, participants will be provided with a pack that contains information about the self-isolation pilot (including requirements and key contacts), a saliva testing kit, signage to display at their place of self-isolation, and PPE.

In self-isolation

Dwelling requirements

20. Participants' places of self-isolation must be within a 50km radius of Auckland¹ or Christchurch Airports (by road).
21. Dwelling requirements for the pilot are based on guidelines for Community Supported Isolation and Quarantine (CommunitySIQ). Pertinently:
 - a) Participants are not permitted to self-isolate with household members, but may self-isolate with other participants in the same travelling party
 - b) There must be no shared ventilation between the dwelling and adjoining dwellings
 - c) There must be no immediate entry and egress to the property shared with adjoining property
 - d) There must be access to sanitary measures (including provision for safely disposing household waste)
 - e) There must be access to reliable means of communication (including cellular coverage for monitoring).
22. Under the COVID-19 Public Health Response (Isolation and Quarantine) Amendment Order (No 3) 2021, participants are required to display a notice, provided by MBIE, at entry points to their place of self-isolation. This notice will specify that it is an offence to enter that place, unless otherwise permitted.

Exercise and smoking

23. Under the COVID-19 Public Health Response (Isolation and Quarantine) Amendment Order (No 3) 2021, participants are able to exercise (while wearing a face covering) and smoke in an outside area that is a) within the boundary of the place of self-isolation, and b) where that outside area is used only by people permitted to enter the participants' place of self-isolation (eg for contactless delivery).

Testing, health and welfare checks

24. The testing of pilot participants largely mirrors the mixed-modality testing regime being piloted across MIQ by the end of October.

¹ And also within Auckland Council boundaries

25. The testing regime is as follows:

Day	Test mode	Location
0	Rapid antigen and nasopharyngeal	Airport (RAT for Auckland participants only)
3	Saliva	Self-isolation (self-administered)
6	Saliva	Self-isolation (self-administered)
9	Saliva	Self-isolation (self-administered)
12	Nasopharyngeal	Community testing centre

26. Couriers will collect samples (contactless) from the property and provide to the agreed upon laboratory. Results will be provided to the participant via text message.
27. MBIE will arrange transportation for participants to community testing centres for the day 12 test.
28. In the event a participant tests positive for COVID-19 in self-isolation, they will be treated akin to community cases. That is, participants will be required to enter MIQ under the direction of a MOoH exercising their powers under s70 of the Health Act 1956.
29. A Clinical Admission Assessment (the Assessment) which is usually undertaken at MIQ facilities by a Health Practitioner, is a required step of the Pilot. A Health Practitioner would contact the participant with a call to undertake the Assessment. Whilst not yet confirmed, work is underway for this call to be made through the contact centre provider Healthline. This option would alleviate workforce and time implications for operationalising the Assessment at the airport.
30. Identification, through this assessment, of participants who may be unable to isolate safely due to any pre-existing health conditions will be managed on a case-by-case basis.
31. If participants report any COVID-19 symptoms in their daily health check, they will be able to be referred for an additional test. If this additional test returns a negative result, the participant will continue to be monitored through the daily health checks. If a positive test result is returned, the participant will be transferred to a MIQ facility and no longer be included in the Pilot.
32. If the participant reports non-COVID-19 health related concerns, they will be advised to contact their General Practitioner to provide appropriate support.
33. If the participant is not responding to the health check systems, this issue will be escalated to MBIE for non-compliance implications.

Compliance monitoring

34. Cabinet agreed that participants be required to comply with electronic monitoring using a smartphone app, and/or comply with regular and random phone-based checks [CAB-21-MIN-0386 refers].
35. Our recommended monitoring option at the time at which the Cabinet paper was prepared was electronic monitoring using a smartphone app. That technology is unable to be procured in time for the pilot's commencement, due to security concerns which were unable to be resolved in the time available.

36. Accordingly, we are close to finalising the procurement of a technology that provides for video calling with GPS. This method will enable participant identity and GPS location to be verified at the time at which a call is made to the participants' phone. However, this technology does not monitor participants' in real-time (eg if they leave their place of self-isolation).
37. If for any reason this video calling with GPS technology cannot be procured in time for the commencement of the trial, we will conduct regular and random phone-based checks until such date as we are able to implement video calling. This method does not provide any certainty that a participant is where they say they are, so we may also conduct contactless self-isolation 'spot checks' if phone-based checks are being used.
38. Procurement and contracting is underway with **Commercial information** as providers of respective options, and is expected to be finalised by 20 October.
39. If it is determined that a participant may not be at their place of self-isolation, the New Zealand Police will be notified.

Breach of requirements

40. The COVID-19 Public Health Response (Isolation and Quarantine) Amendment Order (No 3) 2021 requires that a person who breaches self-isolation requirements (including the requirement to be tested for COVID-19) enter MIQ, and be liable for MIQ fees.

Emergencies

41. Emergency services will be notified of participants' places of self-isolation, to ensure that infection prevention and control protocols are adhered to in the event they need to enter the premises.
42. Under the COVID-19 Public Health Response (Isolation and Quarantine) Amendment Order (No 3) 2021, if a participant experiences an unanticipated, time-critical need for service (eg plumbing) that is necessary to ensure the participant can remain in pilot, the CE of MBIE can authorise a person to enter, subject to conditions (eg vaccination requirements).

Exiting self-isolation

Exit requirements

43. Under the COVID-19 Public Health Response (Isolation and Quarantine) Amendment Order (No 3) 2021, in order to leave self-isolation, the Chief Executive of MBIE must be satisfied that the participant meets low risk indicators², based on the advice of a suitably qualified health practitioner.
44. Work is underway to implement this exit screening with Healthline who will review the participants details and confirm any details over the phone and send confirmation to MBIE to release the Pilot participant.
45. Once MBIE is in receipt of the results of a participant's exit screen, it will contact the participant to advise them that they are permitted to leave self-isolation.

²Under the COVID-19 Public Health Response (Isolation and Quarantine) Order 2020, 'low-risk indicators' means that a person has undergone medical examination and testing required to assess whether they have COVID-19, with a negative result.

Potential changes to the standard MIQ stay

Implications for the self-isolation pilot

46. As you are aware, officials are currently preparing advice for Ministers on potentially reducing the period of managed isolation for border arrivals from 14 to 7 days, followed by 3 days in self-isolation, effective 14 November. This proposal is designed to ensure that the MIQ restrictions placed on people remain proportionate and justifiable, given what we now know about COVID-19 transmission and infectious periods, particularly around the Delta variant.
47. The aim of the self-isolation pilot is to replicate Managed Isolation settings and protocols as much as possible in the community. We therefore seek your agreement that if Ministers make any changes to the length of the standard MIQ stay (currently 14 days), then the length of the self-isolation pilot will alter accordingly.
48. Based on the current proposal, this would mean that the self-isolation pilot would reduce to 7 days. This will be followed by a 3 day stay at home period, during which time participants will be subject to the same conditions and requirements proposed for other border arrivals leaving MIQ. These conditions are still being developed, however they are expected to be less extensive and restrictive than those of the self-isolation pilot.
49. The agreement with a participant's employer to pay \$1,000 for the pilot includes a provision that this charge will be reduced on a pro rata basis if the participant does not receive pilot services for 14 days.

Treatment of participants who began the pilot prior to 14 November

50. It is proposed that on 14 November, all border arrivals who have been in Managed Isolation for 7 days or longer will be eligible to exit Managed Isolation if they have met the low-risk indicators for release. We propose to apply the same treatment to self-isolation pilot participants who have been in self-isolation for 7 days or longer as at that point.

Risks and contingencies

Participants unable to return before 8 December

51. A participant who arrives in New Zealand after 8 December will be unable to participate in the self-isolation pilot, because the pilot ceases on 22 December. All manual/offline MIAS allocations for participants after 8 December will be cancelled.
52. If a participant is unable to return by 8 December due to verifiable reasons beyond their control (eg they test positive for COVID-19, or due to flight cancellations) their MIAS voucher will be reinstated and they will be permitted to enter MIQ under operational contingency. For any other or unverifiable reason, participants will not be permitted to enter MIQ, and must obtain a valid MIAS voucher through usual processes. Participants that use their (invalid) MIAS voucher to board a plane and enter MIQ they will be liable for an offence.

MIQ capacity

53. In the event MIQ capacity does not allow for participants to enter MIQ (eg in the event of an Alert Level to 3 or higher in Christchurch, as agreed by Cabinet [CAB-21-MIN-0386 refers]), we will provide you with further advice.

Scalability of the pilot

54. As previously advised, the full design of the self-isolation pilot will not be scalable beyond the pilot due to the constraints of the public health advice which informed Cabinet's decisions. Cabinet noted that given the inherent risk associated with running a pilot of this nature, the design parameters of the pilot may be more restrictive and resource intensive than those used for a wider scale roll-out of self-isolation. The pilot is also limited in its replicability. Business participants will not necessarily be representative of the general public.
55. We expect that the pilot will test the operational readiness of the system for self-isolation, and inform where processes will need to change for a wider scale roll-out. This includes processes at the border, services required for people in self-isolation including things like transit to their accommodation, and delivery of testing services.

Next steps

56. Cabinet noted that MBIE will report the final list of participants to the Reconnecting New Zealanders Ministerial Group (RNZMG) when final approval processes are complete, for its information [CAB-21-MIN-0386 refers]. We will provide your office with this list as soon as it is available.
57. Cabinet was advised that an evaluation and reporting approach would be developed by MBIE in consultation with MOH, for your approval. We will provide this evaluation plan to you in early November.
58. We are contributing to the advice in development on potentially moving to a shorter stay MIQ model. We will ensure that any changes to the length of the standard MIQ stay are also applied to the duration of the self-isolation pilot.