



BRIEFING

MIQ options for responding to the community outbreak

Date:	22 August 2021	Priority:	Urgent
Security classification:		Tracking number:	NZ001

Action sought		
	Action sought	Deadline
Hon Chris Hipkins Minister for COVID-19 Response	Note update on quarantine rooms availability to support the response to the community outbreak and options available to free up capacity	22 August 2021

Contact for telephone discussion (if required)				
Name	Position	Telephone		1st contact
Megan Main	Deputy Secretary, MIQ	Privacy of natural persons		✓
Privacy of natural persons	Policy Manager, MIQ			

The following departments/agencies have been consulted

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Withdrawn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 update you on current quarantine room availability, changes we are making in response to the community outbreak and options to free up capacity in MIQ to support the response, should more capacity be required. We are available to meet with you to discuss this further.

Recommended action

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

- a **Note** that the most recent Covid-19 community outbreak is evolving rapidly with positive case numbers steadily climbing since the first positive case was detected on Tuesday, 17 August 2021

Noted

- b **Note** that all positive cases to date have been transferred into MIQ. In addition, 6 close contacts have been transferred to the Holiday Inn in Auckland and one close contact has been transferred into MIQ in Christchurch

Noted

- c **Note** that we currently have 180 quarantine rooms available across the country and that our isolation room availability is extremely tight across the whole network

Noted

- d **Note** that we have some levers we can pull (and some we have already pulled) but they all have trade-offs including reducing our ability to respond to concurrent events as we are reducing our operating reserve

Noted

- e **Note** that we do not know yet what additional capacity may be available through DHBs over and above the MIQ capacity to deal with community cases and close contacts

Noted

- f **Agree** that this briefing be proactively release with appropriate withholdings under the Official Information Act 1982.

Agree / Disagree



Megan Main
Deputy Secretary, MIQ
MBIE

22/08/2021



Hon Chris Hipkins
Minister for COVID-19 Response

22 / 08 / 2021

Background

1. The situation of the most recent Covid-19 community outbreak is evolving rapidly with positive case numbers steadily climbing since the first positive case was detected on Tuesday, 17 August 2021.
2. As of Saturday, 5pm 51 positive cases have been reported in total, 45 in Auckland and 6 in Wellington. Given the large number of places of interest and some being large venues/events, we expect the number of positive cases to climb over the coming days.
3. All positive cases to date have been transferred into MIQ. In addition, 6 close contacts have been transferred to the Holiday Inn in Auckland and one close contact has been transferred to MIQ in Christchurch.

Current quarantine availability in MIQFs

4. We currently have 180 quarantine rooms available across the country, broken down by region as follows:
 - a. Auckland – 113 rooms
 - b. Wellington – 32 rooms
 - c. Christchurch – 35 rooms
5. Our isolation room availability is extremely tight across the whole MIQ network.

MIQ options for responding to the community outbreak

6. We have mapped out below a range of options that could free up isolation and quarantine rooms in MIQFs to accommodate both positive cases and close contacts to respond to the community outbreak, should additional capacity be required.
7. In short, we have some levers we can pull (and some we have already pulled) but they all have trade-offs including reducing our ability to respond to concurrent events as we are reducing our operating reserve.
8. Our immediate opportunities are:
 - a. Free up Holiday Inn in Auckland to take community cases as well as symptomatic returnees (DONE)
 - b. Convert Grand Mercure Wellington to a quarantine facility (DONE)
 - c. Use Bay Plaza Wellington for community close contacts (REFERRED TO M-TAG for advice at its meeting on 22 August)
 - d. Use some of the Christchurch operational reserve if there are cases in the South Island (PLANNING UNDERWAY)
 - e. Cancel some upcoming Group arrivals (FOR DISCUSSION)
 - f. Confidential advice entrusted to Government
9. Other opportunities which we do not currently support (but which may become necessary depending on case numbers) are:

- a. Defer ventilation remediation at the Four Points Sheraton Auckland, freeing up 220 rooms from 27 August until mid September (not desirable)
 - b. Amend IPC and public health settings to free up MIQ capacity (not desirable given Delta)
 - c. Request Ministry of Health review of protocols regarding who from the community needs to go into MIQ
10. The following table summarises a range of options being canvassed to create additional capacity if required.

Region	Option	Risk/potential consequences	Mitigations	Status
Auckland	Free up Holiday Inn in Auckland for symptomatic and close contacts to reduce load on Jet Park	Requires returnees to be diverted to other MIFs, impacts operational reserve	N/A	Complete 188 rooms for close contacts
	Defer planned remediation work @ Commercial information	Would free up 224 rooms from 27/8 until mid Sep Does not address ventilation risk Just delays the need to empty facility to fix ventilation	Do not fill all rooms, eg every second room	
Wellington	Convert Grand Mercure dual use facility to dedicated quarantine	Requires cohort diversion Workforce capacity issues Reduces Isolation capacity in WLG Not all rooms can be used as Q, lack of air filters	Divert cohorts now to minimise impact on returnees Expedite installation of air filters	Designation complete
	Use Bay Plaza for close contacts only	May mean we go over capacity in WLG	Plan now to divert returnees to other regions?	Referred to M-TAG 22/8 – can we put close contacts in BP?
Christchurch	Use operating reserve			Tasked CRIQ 21/8 to report back on how they would increase Q capacity if needed

Region	Option	Risk/potential consequences	Mitigations	Status
Hamilton	Pause RSE arrivals due 24/8 to create capacity for community close contacts	Lack of appetite to pause RSEs due to impact on hort sector	Send positives AND close contacts to AKL MIQ	Ask MOH IMT re plans for Hamilton outbreak management
All regions	Break cohorting	IPC risk especially with Delta	Change arrangements in MIF e.g. outdoor time, smoking, moving out of rooms etc	Not recommended
	Release returnees after day 12 with negative tests (MOH lead)	Risk of not completing 14 days and long incubation period, especially given Delta. Is also a risk if we have in facility transmission	Ask all day 12 people to self-isolate for a further 5 days after leaving and get another test	
	Revisit protocols for who needs to enter MIQ from the community (MOH lead)	More close contacts would need to isolate in the community		
	Open another MIF facility	A new facility would take 3 months to set up Workforce issues Time to build IPC arrangements would be high	N/A not an option for consideration	Not recommended
DEMAND LEVERS				
	Cancel (some) upcoming groups: 1. RSEs 116 rooms ARR 24/8 (2 MIFs in HAM)	Reputational and political risk, especially if government has contributed funding	Could consider RSE coming into country without going into MIQ Select sports groups for cancellation that relate to	For discussion with Minister

Region	Option	Risk/potential consequences	Mitigations	Status
	2. English Roses – 37 rooms ARR 27/8 3. Construction Accord – 60 rooms, 1/9	<i>(if outbreak goes for more than a few weeks we will bump into large groups of USAP and fishers arriving in Sep)</i>	events that are likely to be cancelled due to outbreak	
	Cancel (some) incoming flights	Stops NZ'ers coming home. Reputational and political risk Would require restacking cohorts Long haul flights need lead time	Allow citizens (and PRs?) to return but not others	For discussion with Minister
Free and frank opinions				
	Boost DHB isolation capacity	Capacity limited, workforce limited	N/A	MOH