



BRIEFING

Update on MIQ maritime rooms and proposal to increase Pacific Crew Change allocation

Date:	6 August 2021	Priority:	Medium
Security classification:		Tracking number:	2021-4417

Action sought		
	Action sought	Deadline
Hon Chris Hipkins Minister for COVID-19 Response	Agree to increase the number of MIQ rooms used for Pacific-servicing cargo crew from 8 to 28 (increasing the total number of maritime rooms from 60 to 80)	13 August 2021

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

The following departments/agencies have been consulted
Maritime New Zealand, Ministry of Transport, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, MBIE Immigration Policy, Immigration New Zealand

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 Withdrawn |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

Update on MIQ maritime rooms and proposal to increase Pacific Crew Change allocation

Date:	6 August 2021	Priority:	Medium
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Purpose

To provide an overview of the MIQ maritime rooms, and recommend an increase in the number of rooms supporting 14-day isolation for crew joining Pacific-servicing cargo vessels.

Recommended action

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

- a **Note** that MIQ's maritime rooms currently provide approximately:
- 52 rooms for maritime short stays: where people arrive in New Zealand by sea, or arrive by air to then depart as replacement ship crew
 - 8 rooms to support 14-day isolation for crew joining Pacific-servicing cargo vessels, enabling safe and efficient movement of goods through the Pacific.
- Noted*
- b **Note** that in June 2021, Cabinet agreed to increase the visa cap for Pacific-servicing cargo crew in response to higher than anticipated demand, including the entrance of a new shipping line [CAB-21-MIN-0212 refers].
- Noted*
- c **Note** that the MIQ allocation for Pacific-servicing cargo crew was not increased at that time, given lower MIQ demand pressure; however, with demand now higher, the allocation is insufficient to support the increased visa cap.
- Noted*
- d **Agree** to increase the number of rooms used to support 14-day isolation for crew joining Pacific-servicing cargo vessels from 8 to 28 (increasing the total number of maritime rooms from 60 to 80) as soon as practicable through removing vouchers from MIAS.
- Agree / Disagree**
- e **Note** there are a range of other demands on MIQ space, which we have briefed you on [2122-0300 refers], but officials recommend that this increase be prioritised given the COVID-19 and supply chain risks to the Pacific of not doing so.
- Noted*

Privacy of natural persons

Manager, Allocation and Supply
Managed Isolation and Quarantine, MBIE

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Hon Chris Hipkins
Minister for COVID-19 Response

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Overview of maritime rooms

1. MIQ's maritime room allocation is currently 60 rooms (45 in Auckland, 10 in Rotorua, and 5 in Christchurch). These rooms are manually allocated by MBIE as offline allocations.
2. You have previously agreed [2021-2573 refers] for approximately 8 of these rooms to be used to support 14-day isolation for crew joining Pacific-servicing cargo vessels (this number varies day-to-day). These rooms are discussed in the next section.

Overview of short-stay rooms

3. Approximately 52 rooms in the maritime allocation are for short stays. To be eligible for these rooms, people must arrive in New Zealand by sea, or arrive by air to then depart as replacement ship crew.
4. These rooms are proving adequate to meet short stay demand, including some allowance for day-to-day variance. Any unallocated rooms are released back onto MIAS where possible.
5. Transfers between ships and/or airports are escorted by border officials under strict conditions. The Border Executive Board will be providing you with further advice around public health mitigations and restrictions at the maritime border.
6. MIQ rooms are not required when people arrive and depart on the same day – they are escorted directly to or from the airport. Rather, short MIQ stays are required when flight schedules do not align with ship schedules, and sometimes to support testing requirements before crew join a ship.
7. For some small vessels, people can isolate aboard rather than use MIQ rooms (this is managed by New Zealand Customs).
8. These short stays primarily support crew changes for cargo and fishing ships visiting New Zealand; enabling crew changes helps New Zealand meet its obligations as a signatory of the Maritime Labour Convention and maintain New Zealand and Pacific supply chains.
9. Shipping agents send applications to MIQ detailing a ship's reason for coming to New Zealand and the logistics involved (e.g. number of MIQ rooms required, transport plans). Applications are considered by MIQ Operations based on eligibility and capacity (in coordination with other agencies, particularly New Zealand Customs).
10. The *COVID-19 Public Health Response* orders facilitate use of the short-stay maritime rooms as follows:
 - a. The Isolation and Quarantine Order allows for shorter MIQ stays when people are travelling directly from MIQ to then depart New Zealand.
 - b. People arriving into New Zealand on ships face distinct requirements under the Maritime Border Order (as compared to air arrivals, who face requirements under the Air Border Order). Shipmasters are generally required to provide notice before ships arrive in New Zealand; the Order restricts the arrival of foreign ships to:
 - cargo ships
 - fishing ships
 - ships with MFAT-granted diplomatic clearance
 - ships arriving for repair or refitting, reprovision or refuelling, delivery to a business, or compelling humanitarian reasons (with the approval of the Director-General of Health)

- ships with only New Zealand citizens aboard.

New Zealand seafarers overseas have argued for access to the maritime rooms, but we consider current settings fit for purpose

11. Some New Zealand seafarers working overseas have argued that they should be able to access maritime rooms to return home, or that New Zealand is not meeting its Maritime Labour Convention obligations to them. However, MIQ's advice remains that current settings for these workers are fit for purpose [2021-2871 refers].
12. With regards to seafarer repatriation, New Zealand's obligations under the Maritime Labour Convention relate to seafarers on merchant ships that fly the New Zealand flag and on ships visiting New Zealand (rather than to New Zealanders overseas).
13. Seafarers are able to apply for an Emergency Allocation if they are unable to leave their vessel or are under severe mental distress (with several applications already approved); MIQ is working with Maritime New Zealand around options to provide further guidance to potentially eligible seafarers. Additionally, MIAS allows for third party bookings in cases where a seafarer has issues with internet access.
14. Otherwise, seafarers face similar challenges to other New Zealanders working in industries with offshore rotation. In most cases, New Zealand seafarers overseas will have been working on foreign-flagged ships that are not supporting New Zealand supply chains.
15. The Chief Ombudsman has been in contact with MBIE regarding complaints from overseas seafarers facing challenges accessing MIQ. We will keep you updated on our engagement with the Ombudsman on this issue.

Officials recommend an increase in rooms for Pacific-servicing cargo crew

16. In February 2021 [2021-2573 refers], you agreed for approximately 8 maritime rooms to be set aside to support 14-day isolation for crew joining Pacific-servicing cargo vessels.
17. New Zealand has an interest in ensuring the safe and efficient movement of crew and goods through maritime borders; most Pacific Island countries rely on shipping for essential goods and for economic resilience.
18. In June 2021, Cabinet agreed to increase the visa cap for these crew — from 200 to 550 for the year ending 31 January 2022 – in response to higher than anticipated demand, including the entrance of a new shipping line [CAB-21-MIN-0212 refers]. At this time, there was low demand pressure on MIQ, so the number of rooms specifically set aside was not increased.
19. Now that MIQ demand is exceeding supply, we recommend that the number of rooms set aside for these crew be increased to accommodate the new visa cap – from 8 rooms to 28. This would bring the total maritime allocation to 80 (52 for short stays, 28 for Pacific-servicing cargo crew 14-day stays).
20. We expect that demand will continue to exceed supply for much of the coming months, particularly as MIQ continues to accommodate returns from Australia and experiences a seasonal peak around November-January. As long as this situation persists, a 20-room increase in the maritime allocation will result in a corresponding decrease in rooms able to be booked by other returnees.

21. We consider this impact on MIQ supply to be justified by the risks involved in not accommodating 14-day isolation for crew joining Pacific-servicing cargo vessels. In particular:
- a. There is a risk of COVID-19 being introduced to the Pacific if some of these crew face challenges accessing MIQ rooms and forgo 14-day isolation. In one 'close-call' prior to the rooms being introduced, crew for one Pacific-bound ship did not undertake 14-day isolation and brought COVID-19 onto their ship (the ship did not end up leaving New Zealand until all crew were cleared, with associated disruption to the supply chain).
 - b. We are aware of some shipping lines that would likely cease Pacific routes if their crew were not able to undertake 14-day isolation, with adverse affects on the supply of essential commodities to the Pacific.
 - c. Without sufficient supply of 14-day stay rooms, shipping lines servicing the Pacific will likely apply through alternative allocations such as Time Sensitive Travel and Emergency Allocations. These applications would often have merit, where ships are contributing to essential Pacific supply chains. Manually considering these applications would be relatively resource-intensive for MIQ.
22. To date, these crew have been accommodated at specific facilities. However, because these crew complete 14-day stays, MIQ may instead accommodate some across our full range of facilities (i.e. under the cohorting model) going forward.

Next steps

23. If you agree, MIQ will increase the number of rooms used for Pacific-servicing cargo crew to 28 as soon as practicable (for example, there may be a need to work around MIQ's QFT pause response).