



## BRIEFING

### Sequencing of deep-sea fishers into MIQ

<b>Date:</b>	16 July 2021	<b>Priority:</b>	High
<b>Security classification:</b>		<b>Tracking number:</b>	2122-0159

Action sought		
	Action sought	Deadline
Hon Chris Hipkins <b>Minister for COVID-19 Response</b>	<b>Agree</b> the sequencing plan for the arrival of Russian and Ukrainian fishers	21 July 2021
Hon David Parker <b>Minister for Oceans and Fisheries</b>		

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

The following departments/agencies have been consulted
Ministry of Health, Ministry for Primary Industries

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 Withdrawn           |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 agreement to the preferred sequencing option for Russian and Ukrainian fishers entering MIQ in September and October, which is supported by MIQ and industry.

### Recommended action

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

- a **Note** Cabinet has agreed a border exception for 615 deep-sea fishers, including fishers for both BATM and non-BATM class vessels.

*Noted*

- b **Note** up to 450 fishers will be arriving in large groups and require group allocation.

*Noted*

- c **Note** Border Ministers instructed officials to report back with advice on how these fishers could be sequenced to safely enter MIQ in September and October.

*Noted*

- d **Note** MIQ and public health advise that the fishing crews should be accommodated as much as possible in two facilities in Christchurch that have appropriate layouts for them (rooms with balconies, self-contained wings for exclusive use of fishing crews).

*Noted*

- e **Note** in order to maintain cohorting, the largest group arrival size MIQ can accept is 100 people.

*Noted*

- f **Agree** to the proposed arrival schedule, which has been determined in consultation with industry:

Arrival dates	Facility	Number
14-15 September	Sudima	60
21-22 September	Commodore	100
6 October	Chateau	60
26-27 October	Commodore	100
9 November	Sudima	68

Agree /  Disagree

- g **Note** MIQ have agreed to accommodate arrivals from Ukraine in Auckland, separately to the majority of fishers being hosted in Christchurch.

Noted

h **Agree** that due to flight routes, up to 62 arrivals from Ukraine will be accommodated in Auckland, entering in two groups in mid-September

**Agree / Disagree**

i **Note** due to the staggered entry of the fishers, there is likely to be time between their exit from MIQ and them boarding their vessels.

Noted

j **Agree** not to impose post-MIQ restrictions on the fishers over and above what is expected from standard returnees.

**Discuss**  
~~Agree / Disagree~~

k **Note** there are an additional 105 engineers and repair crew for these vessels who hold MIAS vouchers in September and October and are likely to qualify for other critical worker visas.

Noted

l **Note** MIQ does not have the ability to cancel MIAS vouchers of this cohort, but due to the smaller groups of arrivals, will be able to manage them as standard arrivals.

Noted

m **Note** because of large numbers of other groups entering MIQ in September and October, the group allocation will exceed its agreed size on a number of occasions, and vouchers will be taken from MIAS to accommodate this.

Noted

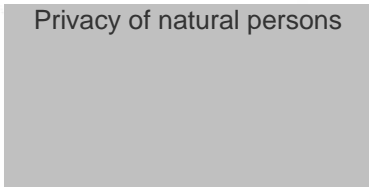
n **Note** MIQ are separately developing advice on any additional costs the mariners will occur and the approach to recovering these costs.

Noted

o **Agree** to proactively release this briefing with appropriate redactions consistent with the Official Information Act 1982 following your decision.

**Agree / Disagree**

Privacy of natural persons



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

16/7/21

Hon Chris Hipkins  
**Minister for COVID-19 Response**

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..... / ..... / .....

Fiona Duncan  
**Director, Food, Skills and Science Policy**  
Policy & Trade, MPI

16/7/21

Hon David Parker  
**Minister for Oceans and Fisheries**

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## Background

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1. Cabinet has approved a border exception for 615 deep-sea fishing crew. 450 of this number are BATM-class crew and need to arrive in New Zealand en masse in September and October to facilitate crew changeover. There are also approximately 105 repair crew who qualify for other critical worker visas who seek entry at the same time to undertake necessary maintenance of the vessels.
2. The reason BATM crew are required in September and October is that the visas of current crew are due to expire from September onwards and MPI understands that the majority of the current crew would not be willing to extend their visas even if this option were available to them.
3. Vessels need to have a minimum number of crew and experienced crew on board in order to meet requirements under Maritime Law. Unmanned vessels pose a significant health and safety and environmental hazard, and pose a risk to other mariners and port users. Vessels do not qualify for insurance if they do not meet the requirements under Maritime Law.
4. One vessel Commerical information has a dry dock slot booked for 1 November which has been booked two years in advance. If it does not have the crew necessary to go into dry dock, the vessel will be unable to operate until a different slot can be booked. There are currently no spaces available until 2023.

## Complexity of managing large fishing crews

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5. MIQ and the Ministry of Health regard deep-sea fishers as a complex group due to their high level of smoking, health and translation needs and high COVID-19 risk profile. Cabinet has agreed that deep-sea fishers for BATM-class vessels are only allowed to enter MIQ through the group allocation, not MIAS, because of their complex needs.
6. The group allocation process allows time to gather information about the group and make appropriate preparations (eg language and health support) as well as control when people enter the country and the size of the groups entering.
7. Lessons from the previous two cohorts of deep-sea fishers in late 2020 and early 2021 demonstrate that significant planning and support is required to safely facilitate these complex groups through MIQ, including ensuring that they are in MIFs that can manage their complex needs.

### *Lessons learnt*

8. The first tranche of mariners in 2020 were a much more complex group to support than had been anticipated. Of the group of 235, 31 tested positive for COVID-19 while in MIQ, and two health workers contracted COVID-19 from this group.
9. A lessons learnt review of government's approach to this cohort was commissioned, which made several key findings:
  - a. There was not adequate multi-agency planning prior to arrival. In particular, a public health assessment was not done, and an operational risk assessment was not done in great enough detail
  - b. Increased clarity was needed around roles and responsibilities within facilities
  - c. Operational improvements needed to be made on: the appropriateness of twin-share rooms, management of the risks of smoking access, education and training for staff on infection prevention and control requirements, contact tracing of staff movements and use of CCTV.

10. Changes were made in order to facilitate the arrival of the second tranche of mariners, who arrived in January 2021. While a small number of mariners tested positive for COVID-19, there was no in-Managed Isolation Facility transmission.
11. Industry has committed to undertake the same pre-arrival requirements that were required for the second tranche of crew that arrived in early 2021, including:
  - a. Self-isolation at home before travel;
  - b. PCR test 72 hours before departure;
  - c. Transit direct from home through Moscow airport and no overnight in Moscow (where relevant);
  - d. No leaving the airport before departure; and
  - e. Masks to be worn on both internal domestic and international flights
12. Industry has also indicated that around 85% of mariners have been vaccinated with the Sputnik vaccine against COVID-19.
13. MIQ intends to accommodate any further groups of mariners in Christchurch, where the facilities and Regional Isolation and Quarantine Command (RIQ) have developed robust processes for dealing with this group.
14. Following general operational improvements (such as improved IPC and use of CCTV), our primary planning concerns in light of the lessons learnt are:
  - a. Reducing the size of arrival groups and pace of their arrivals to operationally safe limits, including adhering to cohorting arrangements
  - b. Managing possible smoking issues
  - c. Ensuring adequate interpreters and translated material
  - d. Ensuring adequate health and security staff are available to support these groups

#### *Health considerations*

15. It will be important to educate mariners about reducing their risks prior to departure for New Zealand as travelling domestically to reach the departure airport and moving through airports potentially expose them to the risk of COVID-19 infection. Experience with the tranche 2 mariners also showed that being briefed about what to expect in MIQ in NZ led to better compliance with MIQ rules and thus lower risk of breaches.
16. Keeping the group numbers down to operationally safe levels is vital for this group particularly given the prevalence of highly transmissible variants and the impact an outbreak would have on facilities and the health workforce in Christchurch during a period of high occupancy. For this reason, mariners should not be booking through MIAS as this does not give facilities sufficient planning time to safely plan for and manage their stay.

## **Facilitating the arrival of fishers**

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### **Sequence of arrivals**

17. Industry initially provided a preferred arrival schedule that was unfeasible for MIQ to manage safely, however following discussion with the industry representative, government and industry have agreed a proposed arrival schedule that works for all parties.

18. This means industry will bring in all workers on commercial flights. Their primary constraint is that Singapore Airlines only arrives into Christchurch on Tuesdays and Wednesdays, which means that arrivals may not consistently line up with cohorting cycles.
19. MIQ has taken this into consideration when developing the below arrival schedule that does align with cohorting schedule:

Arrival dates	Facility	Number
14-15 September	Sudima	60
21-22 September	Commodore	100
6 October	Chateau	60
26-27 October	Commodore	100
9 November	Sudima	68

20. An additional cohort of up to 62 Ukrainians will enter managed isolation in Auckland, as due to flight routes they are unable to travel directly to Christchurch.
21. Having mariners arrive via commercial flights into Christchurch to align with cohorting will result in minimal room wastage. Quarantine room capacity in Christchurch will be increased in preparation for these arrivals from high risk countries.

*Which facilities will be used*

22. Two facilities were previously used for deep-sea fishers: the Commodore (130 rooms + 15 quarantine rooms) and the Sudima (64 rooms + 20 quarantine rooms) in Christchurch. We intend to use these facilities again as they are well set up to meet the needs of this group, with separate wings to keep the deep-sea fishers apart from general returnees and a large number of rooms with balconies to reduce movement around the facility for smoking breaks.
23. MIQ, and the Christchurch region in particular, is under pressure in September and October due to the high number of people seeking to return to New Zealand, including large groups such as travellers to the Antarctic.

*Cohorting arrangements*

24. Under current cohorting arrangements, a facility is 'filled' with new returnees over 96 hours, then does not receive any new entries until all people within the 96 hour cohort have spent 14 days in MIQ and departed. This results in an 18 day cycle of entries. Each facility runs on a different cycle to each other so there are always facilities available to new arrivals.
25. The value of cohorting is the reduction in risk it provides in transmitting COVID-19 from a newly arrived returnee to someone in their final days of MIQ. With new, more transmissible variants and increasing evidence of the role of aerosol based transmission, keeping new returnees, potentially infected with COVID-19, and people nearing the end of their stay separate helps to reduce the likelihood of an infected person entering the community.
26. Public health advice indicates that the Russian and Ukrainian mariners are a high-risk cohort for COVID-19. As we saw with the first tranche of mariners last year, in-MIF transmission spread COVID-19 to other mariners and health staff, and could have led to community transmission. With more transmissible variants such as the Delta variant increasingly common, cohorting is a valuable IPC tool. MIQ and MoH strongly advise that this group be subject to standard cohorting rules. Any suspension of cohorting to facilitate quicker arrival would add considerable risk to the system and MIFs.

27. The maximum flight size that could be accommodated under cohorting is 100 people as this is the number of people the Commodore can host. The fishing industry have indicated they are able to work within these constraints.

#### *Post-MIQ restrictions*

28. Due to the high number of fishers that tested positive for COVID-19 in tranche one last year, Ministers imposed restrictions on the movements of the fishers following their exit from MIQ.
29. Because the fishers are entering New Zealand over a longer timeframe (6-8 weeks), there is likely to be a gap between them exiting MIQ and boarding their ships. This will be very challenging for companies to manage if the fishers are unable to stay in commercial hotels around Christchurch before boarding their ships.
30. There is no reason to believe that, with proper precautions being taken, we will see another repeat of the tranche one experience. As such the need for post-MIQ restrictions is less. We recommend that no post-MIQ restrictions are imposed on the fishers unless public health advice while in MIQ indicates this is necessary.

#### *Bookings on MIAS*

31. There are currently around 360 MIAS bookings on MIAS for fishing and vessel repair crews. Around 100 of the bookings are for specialist engineers and repair crews who are likely to receive Other Critical Worker border exceptions. As they will have the right to enter New Zealand, we are unable to cancel their MIAS bookings.
32. These specialists are entering MIQ in relatively small groups over September and October. Industry has worked with MIQ previously to provide translation support for these smaller groups of maritime crew. MIQ will be able to manage their entry at an operational level.
33. The remainder of the MIAS bookings were made for fishing crews. These vouchers will be cancelled and released on MIAS.

#### **Cost recovery**

34. The fishers are likely to incur costs to MIQ over and above the critical worker fee. Similar to the contractual arrangement put in place for RSE workers, we will seek to recover additional costs from the employers. Additional costs will likely be incurred for interpretation and translation, and possibly also some charge for any room wastage.
35. We will report back when this work has been progressed further with detailed cost estimates.

#### **Next steps**

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36. MPI and MIQ have engaged industry thus far on an 'in-principle' basis. As the deep-sea mariners will be travelling on commercial flights, industry has requested confirmation of the border exception and MIQ arrangements as soon as possible to allow them to book plane tickets on the correct days.
37. Officials intend to inform the mariners of their confirmed group allocation following your agreement to the proposed arrival plan above. This will be in an 'in-confidence' basis as we understand Ministers may wish to announce the Nov-March group allocation package.
38. MIQ will work with MoH to start developing the public health risk assessment and continue refining plans for the mariners' arrival.
39. MIQ will progress work on additional costs and cost recovery, and report back to Ministers by the end of this month with this information.