



# BRIEFING

## New South Wales managed returns – Phase 2

<b>Date:</b>	17 July 2021	<b>Priority:</b>	Urgent
<b>Security classification:</b>		<b>Tracking number:</b>	NSW-007

Action sought		
	Action sought	Deadline
Hon Chris Hipkins <b>Minister for COVID-19 Response</b>	<b>Indicate</b> your preferred option for accommodating Phase 2 New South Wales managed returnees.	19 July 2021

Contact for telephone discussion (if required)			
Name	Position	Telephone	1st contact
Brig Rose King	Joint Head of MIQ	Privacy of natural persons	✓
Privacy of natural persons	Acting General Manager, MIQ Policy		

The following departments/agencies have been consulted
Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Transport, Customs

**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 Withdrawn           |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

## New South Wales managed returns – Phase 2

<b>Date:</b>	17 July 2021	<b>Priority:</b>	Urgent
<b>Security classification:</b>		<b>Tracking number:</b>	NSW-007

### Purpose

To provide you with an update on demand for the urgent or exceptional quota, and seek your preferred option for accommodating Phase 2 New South Wales managed returnees.

### Recommended action

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

- a **Note** that 1000 rooms had been made available for NSW managed returns for the fortnight from 11.59pm, 12 July (Phase 1), and that 200 of these rooms were to be allocated under an urgent or exceptional quota [MBIE BR NSW-001 and NSW-002 refer].  
*Noted*
- b **Note** demand for the urgent or exceptional quota exceeded supply, and the 200 rooms have been fully allocated.  
*Noted*
- c **Note** you previously agreed that MBIE should hold eligible applications for the urgent and exceptional quota that are not allocated a place in the original quota of 200 rooms for priority allocation among a second cohort of returnees [NSW-005 refers].  
*Noted*
- d **Note** MBIE expects that all urgent or exceptional applications will be fully processed by 20 July.  
*Noted*
- e **Note** you have previously agreed, in principle, that MIQ capacity for any further NSW managed returns (under Phase 2) be reduced to approximately 500-550 rooms a fortnight [MBIE BR NSW-004 refers].  
*Noted*
- f **Agree** that, for Phase 2, any difference between the number of rooms allocated to urgent or exceptional cases (still to be confirmed) and the number of rooms remaining will be allocated to airlines (ie Air New Zealand or Qantas).  
 Agree /  Disagree
- g **Indicate** your preferred option for NSW managed returns – Phase 2:  
  - Option (a)** For the fortnight from 28 July, allocate 530 rooms across multiple MIQFs.  
 Agree /  Disagree
  - Option (b)** For the fortnight from 2 August, allocate 600 rooms across the Four Points and the Grand Millennium facilities (with only NSW returnees in these facilities).  
 Agree /  Disagree

h **Agree** that this briefing be proactively released with appropriate withholdings under the Official Information Act 1982.

Agree /  Disagree

Privacy of natural persons

**Acting General Manager, MIQ Policy**  
MIQ, MBIE

17/07/2021 6:23pm



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

18/07/2021

## **Background**

---

### **NSW managed returns for the fortnight from 11.59pm, 12 July 2021 (Phase 1)**

1. MBIE advised you that 1000 rooms would be made available for managed returns from New South Wales (NSW) for the fortnight from 11.59pm, 12 July 2021, leveraging the 500 rooms set aside for Quarantine-Free Travel (QFT), cohorting underutilisation, and contingency capacity [MBIE BR NSW-001 refers].
2. You agreed that:
  - a) 80% of NSW managed return flights be available on first-come, first-served basis via airlines (ie be put to market), and that a 20% quota (200 rooms) be set aside for urgent or exceptional cases [MBIE BR NSW-002 refers].
  - b) A person must fulfil one or more criteria to be eligible for a NSW managed return flight under the urgent or exceptional quota [MBIE BR NSW-002 refers].
  - c) A person could only access the quota if they were a New Zealand citizen, permanent resident, or ordinarily resident in NZ, and that partners and dependents of accepted people were also eligible for the quota, if they travelled with the accepted person to NSW, and were returning with them back to NZ (subject to immigration settings) [MBIE BR NSW-002 refers].
  - d) A person could only access the quota if they had travelled to NSW prior to 11.59pm, 22 June 2021 (with discretion to consider cases that travelled afterward) [MBIE BR NSW-004 refers].
3. The 200 rooms available under the urgent or exceptional quota have now been fully allocated.

### **Further NSW managed returns (Phase 2)**

4. You agreed, in principle, that MIQ capacity for any further NSW managed returns during Phase 2 be reduced to approximately 500-550 rooms a fortnight, to enable a sustainable response to the NSW situation [MBIE BR NSW-004 refers].
5. You also agreed that all eligible applications for the urgent and exceptional quota that are not allocated a place in the original quota of 200 rooms be held by MBIE for priority allocation among a second cohort of NSW returnees, (if required) [MBIE BR NSW-005 refers].
6. This briefing sets out options for managing NSW returns during Phase 2.

## **Demand for urgent or exceptional quota**

---

### **Demand for the urgent or exceptional quota exceeds supply under Phase 1**

7. There was significant demand for NSW managed return flights under the urgent or exceptional quota during Phase 1.
8. As at 2.30pm, 17 July:
  - a) MFAT had fielded contact from 1849 unique customers, receiving 4844 calls and 830 emails
  - b) MFAT had issued 776 application forms
  - c) Immigration New Zealand had received 653 applications

- d) Immigration New Zealand had approved 286 applications
  - e) Immigration New Zealand had declined 43 applications
  - f) Immigration New Zealand had 133 applications that require further information
  - g) Immigration New Zealand had 255 applications yet to be processed
9. Applications will not be fully processed by Immigration New Zealand until Tuesday 20 July. MBIE will provide your office with updated figures once in receipt of them; however, we are aware that there have been a number of duplicate applications submitted.
10. In line with your agreement, MFAT advised call centre contacts on 16 July that the initial allocation of MIQ rooms for urgent or exceptional cases had been reached, but that any applications received before the cut-off time would continue to be processed, and if subsequently approved, held by MBIE pending further decisions about future managed return flights.

## **Proposed approach to Phase 2 NSW managed returns**

### **There are two options: 530 rooms from 28 July, or 600 rooms from 2 August**

11. There are two separate options for scheduling passenger flights for Phase 2 NSW managed returns:
- Option A:** For the fortnight from 28 July, **530 rooms** could be allocated across various Auckland MIQFs, or
- Option B:** For the fortnight from 2 August, **600 rooms** could be allocated across the Four Points and Grand Millennium MIQFs.
12. The advantages and disadvantages of options (a) and (b), as they relate to key operational matters, are presented below.

	<b>Option (a)</b>	<b>Option (b)</b>
<b>Rooms</b>	Less rooms available	More rooms available
<b>Cohorting</b>	Cohorting would be retained	Cohorting would be retained
<b>Mixing</b>	Managed NSW returnees would be allocated across several MIQFs	There would essentially be two dedicated MIQFs for managed NSW returnees
<b>Timing</b>	More expedient managed return of people from NSW (which may be particularly important regarding urgent or exceptional cases) (ie last flight of Phase 1 on 25 July and first flight of Phase 2 on 28 July)	Delay in return of people from NSW by one week (ie last flight of Phase 1 on 25 July and first flight of Phase 2 on 2 August)
<b>Remediation</b>	Ventilation remediation work at the Novotel would need to be deferred.	Planned ventilation remediation work for the Four Points (which is currently suspended) would be delayed further
<b>Cleaning</b>	Less time available for cleaning in between exiting returnees and	Greater time available for cleaning in between exiting returnees and managed NSW returnees

	managed NSW returnees – will stretch MIQ workforce	
--	--	--

### **Approved urgent or exceptional cases should be prioritised under Phase 2**

13. In line with your agreement, remaining urgent or exceptional applications that have been approved will be allocated Phase 2 rooms (530 or 600) first.
14. Whilst we know that demand for the 200 rooms put aside for urgent or exceptional need exceeded supply under Phase 1, we are not yet certain on the total number of rooms that will be required to accommodate people with approved urgent or exceptional applications under Phase 2.
15. The number of rooms required for NSW managed returnees under Phase 2 will likely be less than the number of applications received (eg due to sharing rooms, duplicate applications, or people having secured flights via the market).
16. Urgent or exceptional needs may increase with the passage of time. People who have had applications approved, but failed to secure MIQ places during Phase 1, may experience significant distress between now and 28 July. Similarly, there may be people who did not submit an application before the cut-off time, but for whom urgent or exceptional needs manifest before the end of July fortnight (ie 13 August) – when rooms may be required for a Phase 3 NSW managed return.
17. In these events, people will need to be prioritised through MFAT’s consular process (working directly with airlines). At this stage, approximately 2-3 people per day are entering MIQ through this pathway. Any such people will effectively be subtracted from the Phase 2 priority pool.
18. As previously noted, we will provide your office with updated figures, once in receipt of them (expected to be 20 or 21 July).

### **Once we have filled Phase 2 rooms with remaining urgent and exceptional cases, any existing rooms will be allocated through airlines**

19. Once in receipt of all processed urgent and exceptional quota applications, we will establish how many rooms – if any – remain from the 530 or 600 (depending on your preferred option) available for Phase 2.
20. Any difference between the number of rooms remaining and the number of rooms allocated to urgent or exceptional cases will be allocated to airlines (ie Air New Zealand or Qantas).
21. We will work with airlines to discuss our preference that they work backward through outstanding cancellations to allocate any remaining rooms (ie rather than putting flights directly to market).

### **This proposal assumes current settings remain constant**

22. This course of action assumes that public health and policy settings remain constant (ie the incidence of COVID-19 in NSW continues to pose concern, and that MIQ is necessary for people returning to New Zealand from there). It does not entertain the spectre of further COVID-19 pauses with, ongoing lockdowns in, or the need for managed returns from, other QFT places (eg Victoria).
23. Public health advice on the NSW situation may change throughout Phase 1 or 2. That is, we may arrive at a juncture where MIQ is no longer necessary (noting that NSW’s current lockdown ends at 11.59pm, 30 July 2021). The Ministry of Health will complete its next public

health risk review of the NSW situation this week. If there is any significant change to public health or policy settings following this review, we will provide you with updated advice.

## Next steps

---

24. In the interests of providing people in NSW seeking to return to New Zealand with some clarity and certainty, we would like to engage with Air New Zealand and Qantas as soon as possible to operationalise your decisions.
25. In receipt of your decisions, the Ministry of Transport will engage with Air New Zealand and Qantas to determine:
  - a) The overall allocation between airlines of approved urgent or exceptional cases under Phase 2.
  - b) A process for managing approved urgent or exceptional cases who hold prior/cancelled bookings with one airline, but may need to be asked if they would accept credit and re-purchase a flight from the other airline to secure an urgent or exceptional room.
  - c) The overall allocation between airlines of any remaining rooms under Phase 2, once urgent or exceptional cases have been confirmed as booked.
26. In using MIQ capacity on Phase 2 NSW managed returns, MIQ has limited capacity if the border and/or domestic systems are required to respond to concurrent COVID-19 events. The Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet is preparing advice to be put to Ministers next week on a wider range of possible options if this situation were to eventuate.
27. Communications teams across agencies are working with your office on key messages and announcements about the next lot of MIQ NSW managed response rooms available. Material will be made available on the Unite Against COVID-19 website and released proactively, in conjunction with MFAT, Ministry of Transport and Ministry of Health.