



BRIEFING

Medium-risk pathway: Standard self-isolation requirements and additional self-isolation requirements for specific groups

Date:	10 December 2021	Priority:	High
Security classification:		Tracking number:	MBIE: 2122-2097 MoH: 20212706

Action sought		
	Action sought	Deadline
Hon Chris Hipkins Minister for COVID-19 Response	<p>Agree to the standard settings for all travellers to self-isolate under the medium-risk pathway.</p> <p>Agree that elite sports and certain professional cultural groups can go offsite to train or rehearse, with approval and in accordance with the settings in this paper.</p> <p>Agree to forward this briefing to the Reconnecting New Zealanders Ministerial Group.</p>	13 December 2021

Contact for telephone discussion (if required)			
Name	Position	Telephone	1st contact
Kara Isaac	General Manager – Policy, MIQ	Privacy of natural persons	✓
Maree Roberts	Deputy-Director General		✓
Privacy of natural persons	Senior Policy Advisor – Policy, MIQ		

The following departments/agencies have been consulted
Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet, Ministry of Culture and Heritage, Sport New Zealand, MBIE Major Events

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 Withdrawn |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

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Purpose

This briefing provides you with advice on the public health settings for travellers self-isolating under the medium risk pathway. This includes advice on the standard settings that will apply to all travellers under this pathway (individuals and groups), and additional advice for elite sports teams and professional cultural groups that need to leave their place of self-isolation to train or rehearse under this pathway.

Recommended action

The Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment (MBIE) and the Ministry of Health recommend that you:

- a **Note** that decisions on the detailed settings for the medium-risk pathway were delegated to you, in consultation with the Reconnecting New Zealanders Ministerial Group.
- b **Note** that final public health advice for people travelling under the medium-risk pathway is contingent on further advice about the Omicron variant.

Noted

Noted

- c **Agree** that the following standard guidance will apply to all travellers, including individuals, bubbles, groups, and classes of people, to enable them to self-isolate for 7 days under the medium-risk pathway:
- i. Each traveller needs to return a day 0/1 PCR test, and RATs on days 3, 5 and 7.
 - ii. Individuals arriving on the same day may choose to become a bubble (eg in a hotel environment) after returning a day 0/1 negative test, if they are not already a bubble in virtue of travelling together and sharing a room.
 - iii. Bubbles can access common areas and facilities together as long as they have exclusive use of that facility or no one else can use that specific part of a facility at the same time.
 - iv. Individuals/bubbles can move to and use a communal smoking area after returning a day 0/1 negative result.
- Agree / Disagree*
- d **Agree** that elite sports and some professional cultural groups should be enabled to go offsite to train or rehearse, but that this will be restricted to groups that have been approved by:
- a. Sport New Zealand or MBIE Major Events for elite sports groups/events
 - b. Ministry of Culture and Heritage for professional cultural groups.
- Agree / Disagree*
- e **Agree** to the following additional guidelines for approved elite sports and professional cultural groups under the medium-risk pathway:
- i. Permit groups to start training/rehearsing offsite after returning a negative day 0/1 PCR test. Usual testing requirements apply including Rapid Antigen Tests on days 3,5,and 7
 - ii. Approved groups will be able to leave their place of self-isolation in order to train or rehearse at an offsite location that they have sole use of during the time the group is using it
 - iii. Private vehicles need to be used, and where possible driven by a member of the group. If a driver/s outside the group is required, the driver/s and all passengers must use PPE as set out in the guidance from the Ministry of Health.
- Agree / Disagree*
- f **Note** that if a member of a group is identified as a positive COVID-19 case, their entire bubble will most likely be considered close contacts, and will be required to self-isolate for an additional 10 days after their last contact with the confirmed case. They will then not be able to go offsite to train or rehearse.
- Noted
- g **Agree** that the Ministry of Health make information and guidance available on their website by 24 December for both standard travellers and elite sports and certain professional cultural groups that are travelling to New Zealand under the medium-risk pathway.
- Agree / Disagree*
- h **Direct** the approving agencies to publish on their websites by 24 December the process and criteria for approving such groups to use the offsite training/rehearsal guidelines.

Agree / Disagree

- i **Agree** to forward this briefing to the Reconnecting New Zealanders Ministerial Group for their information.

Agree / Disagree

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

Agree / Disagree



Kara Isaac
General Manager, MIQ Policy
MIQ, MBIE

10 / 12 / 2021



Dr Ashley Bloomfield
Director General of Health, Ministry of Health

9 / 12 / 2021



Hon Chris Hipkins
Minister for COVID-19 Response

14 / 12 / 2021

Background

Reconnecting New Zealand to the world

1. Our COVID-19 context is changing – we have shifted our overall strategy to focus on minimisation and protection, and announced the COVID-19 Protection Framework, which lays out our domestic response to COVID-19 for a highly vaccinated population.
2. On Wednesday 24 November, Cabinet introduced the approach for allowing border arrivals to enter New Zealand under the medium-risk pathway. This included the following steps:
 - Fully vaccinated New Zealanders and other eligible travellers can travel to New Zealand from Australia without staying in MIQ from 11.59pm Sunday, 16 January 2022
 - Fully vaccinated New Zealanders and other eligible travellers can travel to New Zealand from all other countries from 11.59pm Sunday, 13 February 2022
 - All fully vaccinated individuals will be able to travel to New Zealand from 30 April 2022 onwards, with the re-opening staged over time.
3. Travellers under the medium-risk pathway are required to self-isolate for 7 days.

Medium-risk pathway settings

4. Cabinet has further agreed to the following settings for people self-isolating under the medium-risk pathway:
 - a) no limitations or requirements on how people travel from their arrival airport to their location of self-isolation;
 - b) minor limitations on where people may undertake their self-isolation to avoid sharing facilities with other parties;
 - c) minor limitations on who may be present while a person is undertaking self-isolation in a home to avoid visitors on the premises; and
 - d) limited (traveller-initiated) in-premises welfare support for people undertaking their self-isolation.
5. You were authorised by the Social Wellbeing Committee to make decisions on the detailed settings for the medium-risk pathway, in consultation with the Reconnecting New Zealanders Ministerial Group [SWC-21-MIN-0200].

Current settings prior to the medium-risk pathway opening

6. For the vast majority of travellers, there is currently only one pathway into New Zealand – through MIQ. Under the current model, most travellers complete 7 days in MIQ, followed by 3 days in self-isolation. This also applies to people travelling in groups.
7. Group allocations are currently issued to groups of people travelling together for an event or common purpose (such as sports teams) and to classes of people, such as refugees, Afghanistan returnees, Antarctic researchers, critical health workers, and international students, that may not arrive together in a 'group', but share similar attributes.

Some groups need to train/rehearse during self-isolation in order to prepare for significant sporting and cultural events

8. Groups can seek an exemption to train or to rehearse, or for another activity, while in MIQ. For example, sports teams can train in their MIQ Facility (usually the Chateau on the Park in Christchurch, which is accustomed to international sports teams), or more recently in an approved offsite training facility, after returning a negative day 3 test (or a day 6 test previously). Bubble sizes have varied from whole team bubbles to multiple bubbles depending on risk profile following a public health assessment.
9. With the introduction of the 3 days of self-isolation at the end of their MIQ stay, it was unclear how groups would continue to be able to train safely for those final three days. As a result, you directed that, if needed, MBIE could allow the Bangladesh cricket team, arriving on 10 December, to stay in MIQ for a full 10 days rather than to self-isolate for the last 3 days to ensure the team could continue to train. However, MBIE and the Ministry of Health have worked with New Zealand Cricket to support the Bangladesh cricket team to move to self-isolation on day 7 and train while in self-isolation for 3 days. For the 3 days of self-isolation the responsibility is split:
 - a) New Zealand Cricket will be responsible for the team during self-isolation, and will be responsible for sourcing accommodation (in line with Ministry of Health guidelines), compliance, and day 9 testing.
 - b) MIQ will be responsible for transfers between their accommodation to the training facility and control over the sports facility.
10. New Zealand Cricket have found this difficult to arrange for the Bangladesh cricket team as accommodation guidance under the current model has been focussed on individuals/families rather than groups with a need to train, and it has been unclear to what extent MIQ's Operational Framework would need to be followed outside an MIQ facility. In particular, requirements for the team to use a separate exit/entrance compared to other hotel guests has been logistically difficult.

Standard guidance for travellers self-isolating under the medium-risk pathway

11. Under the medium-risk pathway, eligible individuals and groups will be required to self-isolate for 7 days. These travellers will no longer need to apply for MIQ vouchers or an offline group allocation, as MIQ will only be required for those travelling on the high-risk pathway in the future, ie unvaccinated New Zealanders and those travelling from very high-risk countries, proportionate to the public health risk that these travellers pose.
12. Travellers going through the medium-risk pathway are less risky from a public health perspective than those using MIQ on the high-risk pathway. MBIE and the Ministry of Health have been working to design the requirements for self-isolation under the medium-risk pathway, including proposals for how to allow elite sports teams and some professional cultural groups to train and/or rehearse to at least the degree that they would be able to if in MIQ.

Standard guidance will apply to most travellers and needs to work not just for family bubbles and individual travellers

13. Standard guidance needs to work for most travellers including those who currently arrive in groups or specific classes of people. It is not feasible to have bespoke arrangements for every type of traveller with a particular requirement. While self-isolating in accordance with the standard guidance may be difficult in some situations (eg for a large family that require affordable accommodation, or for large groups to locate appropriate accommodation), we have worked to make the guidance settings as flexible for all types of travellers as possible.

14. Some particular groups and classes of people and their requirements are outlined in the table below, along with how we propose to mitigate these identified challenges:

Groups / classes of people	Specific requirements that need to be met in standard self-isolation guidance	Proposals for the standard guidance to mitigate these issues
International students	Some will require the use of shared facilities and common areas (within bubbles), in order to feasibly accommodate all entering international students, and the ability to leave their room to smoke in a hotel or hostel type of accommodation.	Standard guidance will include the ability for people to use a communal smoking area and share common areas within a bubble after returning a day 0/1 negative result.
Fishers	Require the ability to leave their room to smoke.	As above. Industry body in charge of procuring suitable accommodation.
Antarcticans	Need to isolate for 14 days prior to onward travel due to lower risk tolerance for transmission to Antarctica.	International government bodies procure accommodation for 14 days (facilitated by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade).
Pacific cargo crew	Need to isolate for 14 days, as per Pacific governments' requests.	Industry body procures accommodation for 14 days.
501 deportees	Need to self-isolate in accordance with the guidance.	We are currently working with Corrections and Police on an approach.

Standard public health guidelines proposed for travellers under the medium-risk pathway

15. Note that all public health advice under the medium-risk pathway is subject to change in response to the Omicron variant, if required.
16. If you agree, the Ministry of Health will be making standard guidance available on its website by 24 December for all travellers seeking to travel under the medium-risk pathway, in line with the following settings:

Settings	Standard guidelines for travellers under the medium-risk pathway
Standard testing requirements	Usual testing requirements are that each traveller needs to return a day 0/1 PCR test, and RATs on days 3, 5 and 7.
Bubbles	Permit individuals who arrive on the same day to become a single or multiple bubbles after every member has returned a day 0/1 negative result if those members are not already a bubble in virtue of having travelled together and sharing a room. Eg people that have their own hotel rooms. Only members in a bubble may share elevators, common areas, rooms, and onsite facilities together.
Common areas / shared facilities	Bubbles can access common areas (eg kitchen, bathrooms, and their bubble member's rooms) of their accommodation as long as they have exclusive use of that common area or no one else can use that specific part of the accommodation at the same time. Note that the Social Wellbeing Committee agreed that people undertaking self-isolation need to avoid sharing facilities with "other parties" [SWC-21-MIN-0200]. This essentially means that different bubbles cannot share facilities (eg kitchens, bathrooms).

	The bubble also needs to reach the designated area while using appropriate public health measures (including PPE and physical distancing from people outside their bubble).
Smoking	Individuals/bubbles can move to and use a smoking area (eg in a hotel) after returning a day 0/1 negative result, with no interaction with others. Individuals/bubbles would be expected to work with their hotel/accommodation providers to find suitable arrangements to allow them to smoke in a designated area.

Groups that have particular requirements to go offsite under the medium-risk pathway

17. Some groups have specific requirements that need to be accommodated during their period of self-isolation. Some elite sports teams who are entering New Zealand to partake in international grade sporting matches, not those returning at the end of a season, have a particular need to train together while isolating. Other groups may also have a requirement to rehearse or practice together while in isolation, such as certain professional cultural groups. Some of these requirements may be adequately met onsite (such as a well-ventilated conference room or a roof top terrace), while other requirements will need to be met offsite (such as certain training spaces).
18. Both the groups and government need assurance that self-isolation is well managed:
 - Groups/organisations need a high level of assurance that their event/tournament is safe and will go ahead, and that their players/members will be COVID-19 free and able to participate
 - Government need assurance that groups' activities do not pose a significant risk to public health.
19. You previously indicated that sports teams and other groups should be given guidance on how to safely self-isolate and train, and then be left to manage their self-isolation arrangements themselves (comments made to briefing 2122-1550 refer). On 30 November, in the Border Executive Board meeting, Minister Robertson also noted that if groups could arrange to train in self-isolation to the same extent that they would be able to in a MIQ facility, that groups should manage themselves under the medium-risk pathway.

Exceptions to train/rehearse together offsite should be limited to particular groups

20. We have worked up public health guidelines that ensure that some groups can train or undertake a group activity while in self-isolation. However, these guidelines are intended to be limited to elite sports teams and certain professional cultural groups. This means that many sports teams and other groups will not be able to leave self-isolation.
21. Without limiting the scope of who these guidelines apply to, we run the risk of any person travelling under the medium-risk pathway deciding to leave self-isolation to exercise, perform, or practice an activity. We do not think this is appropriate. Many sports people/groups and cultural groups are able to meet their requirements in self-isolation, eg by hiring exercise bikes or having sole occupancy of an Airbnb accommodation with an outdoor area or a pool or a tennis court.
22. **Annex A** contains a list of the groups known to be coming to New Zealand in 2022 because they have applied for group allocations in MIQ. However, we expect there to be more groups intending to travel under the medium-risk pathway, many of which would want to leave self-isolation.
23. We consider that leaving self-isolation should be limited to groups that:

- a) Are performing their sport or event at a very high level (eg representing their country at a national level), and cannot adequately train or rehearse while in self-isolation.
- b) Have high economic or cultural significance to New Zealand.
- c) Are part of an organisation that can be responsible for their self-isolation plans, and that can work with New Zealand agencies on their training/rehearsal requirements.

Groups using special guidelines will need to be approved

- 24. We propose that sector specific New Zealand agencies have responsibility for approving which groups can leave self-isolation to train or rehearse using the Ministry of Health specific guidance – namely Sport New Zealand, MBIE Major Events, and the Ministry of Culture and Heritage.
- 25. We have discussed the requirements of this approval role with the named agencies, who are supportive of this approach. These agencies will set out their process and criteria for approving groups to use the offsite training/rehearsal guidelines for their sector and approve the groups allowed to use them according to their own criteria. These agencies would not be responsible for the accommodation and facility arrangements for the groups nor the monitoring of groups during their self-isolation.

Public health guidelines proposed for certain elite sports and professional cultural groups travelling under the medium-risk pathway

- 26. The Ministry of Health will publish guidance for approved teams/groups to leave self-isolation (eg in order to train or rehearse) reflecting the following settings by 24 December.
- 27. Note that this guidance will be in addition to standard guidance on self-isolation, which will also apply to groups using this guidance.

Settings	Public health guidelines for approved groups
Bubbles	<p>Permit a group to become a single or multiple bubbles after every member has returned a day 0/1 negative result if those members are not already a bubble (eg because they are sharing a room).</p> <p>It will be up to each group to decide how many bubbles it divides into and how big each bubble is.</p> <p>Only people that are undertaking an activity together, or are supporting that group/team to undertake an activity, can form a bubble. Members of the groups that do not have a requirement to undertake a group activity should continue to self-isolate on their own.</p> <p>Guidance will advise that while the risk of transmission in a bigger bubble stays the same, the number of people impacted by the risk increases with the size of the bubble (which may also pose a risk to the event/tournament going ahead). This can be mitigated by forming smaller bubbles rather than a whole group bubble. This is a risk for the group to consider when deciding on the size of any bubbles they form.</p> <p>Only group members in your bubble may share vehicles, elevators, common areas, rooms, and offsite facilities together.</p>
Ability to leave the premises	<p>Permit 'approved' groups to leave their place of isolation to train or undertake a required group activity offsite.</p> <p>An offsite facility needs to be either outdoors or an indoor area with good ventilation, and permission is needed from the facility providers.</p> <p>The facility needs to be available for the sole use of the group at the time when the group is using it (ie that the group is the only one using the facility during the time that they are using it), with adequate time/cleaning in</p>

	between (this is less of a concern for the use of outdoor venues). For example, a sports team can use a sports oval for four hours a day to train, and the sports oval can be open to the public outside that four hours (plus any time required to clean).
Testing requirements in order to go offsite	Permit groups to start training/rehearsing offsite after returning a negative day 0/1 PCR test. Usual testing requirements apply including RATs on day 3,5 and 7.
Transport to and from accommodation to training/rehearsal facility	Private/sole use vehicles need to be used to transport a group out of self-isolation to a facility and back again, and where possible driven by a member of the group. If a driver/s outside the group is required, the driver/s and all passengers must use appropriate PPE and physically distance. Where possible a group should exit/enter their accommodation using a private entrance, otherwise all efforts must be made to use appropriate PPE and physical distancing of other people outside their bubble. Note that this is a higher requirement than for people travelling from the airport of arrival to their place of accommodation for which there is no limitations or requirements on how people travel.

Identified positive cases of COVID-19 in groups

28. If a group member tests positive during any of their scheduled tests in self-isolation, they will become part of the community response, as will any close contacts. Close contacts will include the entire group unless it is operating in separate bubbles.
29. Where a bubble has a positive case, its members will likely be categorised as close contacts and will no longer be able to leave their place of self-isolation to train or rehearse until they have been released from self-isolation. Currently close contacts are required to self-isolate for 10 days since their last exposure with a confirmed case, and will only be released from self-isolation provided no new or worsening symptoms and negative day 8 test. This will mean that groups are required to self-isolate for an additional period once a positive case has been identified.

A small number of groups will continue to need to, or want to, go into MIQ

Some groups we know will be staying in MIQ

30. Some groups will not be eligible for the medium-risk pathway (eg refugees and Afghanistan returnees who are not vaccinated or cannot have their vaccination status verified) and will continue to go into MIQ via the high-risk pathway.
31. In addition, Border Ministers have agreed that all teams and approximately 400 critical attendees for the Cricket World Cup (CWC) can stay in MIQ, even if they are eligible for the medium-risk pathway. This decision was made to enable CWC organisers to plan travel and accommodation of the teams and associated officials with sufficient certainty, given the limited time remaining to finalise these arrangements. Note that they will all be arriving by 14 February.

Other groups may also want to stay in an MIQ facility or have additional support available to them even if they qualify for the medium-risk pathway

32. We understand it is Ministers' expectation that groups who qualify for the medium-risk pathway or their employers will arrange their own self-isolation accommodation with support from a sector relevant agency where relevant. Those groups who are approved for offsite training/rehearsal will also arrange their own offsite facility for this purpose once approved by either Sport New Zealand, MBIE Major Events, or the Ministry of Culture and Heritage in line with the guidance outline in this paper.

33. We do not yet know what the demand for accommodation and offsite facilities will be under the medium-risk pathway, as we only have experience of groups coming in through a heavily controlled and restricted MIQ system. Sport New Zealand have indicated that they expect significant demand from national sporting organisations who have been unable to host international teams during the pandemic. While it will ultimately be up to Sport New Zealand, MBIE Major Events, and the Ministry of Culture and Heritage to determine who can use offsite facilities, it may be that significant demand for accommodation and offsite facilities will make it difficult for some groups to make adequate arrangements.

We expect the medium-risk pathway to substantially reduce demand for MIQ from border arrivals

34. We are considering the reduced capacity in MIQ from border arrivals with other agencies and will provide further advice in January.

Next steps

35. If you agree to the proposed approach, the Ministry of Health will publish standard guidance for self-isolation as well as offsite training/rehearsal guidance on their website in line with the settings in this paper by 24 December.
36. The Ministry of Culture and Heritage and Sport New Zealand will publish on their website by 24 December their processes and criteria for approving specific groups to be using the offsite training/rehearsal guidance and operate the approvals process for their respective sectors. This will include adding groups to the Government Approved Events list to enable Immigration requirements.
37. At the meeting of Border Exception Ministers on 30 November 2021, Ministers agreed to not consider the proposed package of group allocations for March 2022 to May 2022, pending final decisions on how certain groups will be able to self-isolate under the medium-risk pathway [briefing 2122-1754 refers]. Officials will provide you with further advice on this in January.

Annex A

Known groups of travellers early 2022

This table excludes travellers allocated through the Group Allocation process who are expected to travel as individuals/family groups, including New Zealand citizens and residents returning home.

Group	Number of passengers	Arrival dates	Status	Likely to be considered for special offsite guidance
Refugee Programme	100 pax every 6 weeks	July 2021 to end June 2022	Approved by Ministers	Not eligible for medium-risk pathway
Antarctic researchers	256 pax	Jan to Feb 2022	Approved by Ministers	No offsite training/rehearsal requirements – will be using standard guidance for self-isolation under the medium-risk pathway
Cricket World Cup	Approx 600 pax total	Jan to Feb 2022	Approved by Ministers	Already approved to be accommodated in MIQ
Netherlands Cricket Team	35 pax	March 2022	Approved by Ministers	Likely to be considered for offsite training/rehearsal guidance under the medium-risk pathway
US Antarctic Programme	40 pax	March-May 2022	Pending approval	No offsite training/rehearsal requirements – will be using standard guidance for self-isolation under the medium-risk pathway