



BRIEFING

Self-Isolation Pilot Final evaluation report

Date:	13 January 2022	Priority:	Medium
Security classification:		Tracking number:	2122-2306

Action sought		
	Action sought	Deadline
Hon Chris Hipkins Minister for Covid-19 Response	Note the attached evaluation report Agree to distribute to Reconnecting New Zealanders Ministerial Group Agree that MBIE will publish the final report from the evaluation of the Self-Isolation Pilot in February	17 January 2022

Contact for telephone discussion (if required)				
Name	Position	Telephone		1st contact
Christina Sophocleous Jones	General Manager Self-Isolation Pilot	Privacy of natural persons		✓
Privacy of natural persons	Principal Advisor Policy			

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Withdrawn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



BRIEFING

Self-Isolation Pilot Evaluation Report: arriving and transferring to self-isolation.

Date:	13 January 2022	Priority:	Medium
Security classification:		Tracking number:	2122-2306

Purpose

This briefing provides you with the final report from the evaluation of the Self-Isolation Pilot.

Recommended action

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

- a **Note** this report brings together and updates the information in the three interim evaluation reports
Noted
- b **Note** the key findings of the Evaluation of the Self-Isolation Pilot
Noted
- c **Agree** that this report will be published on the MBIE website in February 2022
 Agree Disagree
- d **Agree** to distribute this report to the Reconnecting New Zealand Ministerial Group
 Agree Disagree
- e **Agree** that this briefing is proactively released with appropriate withholdings under the Official Information Act 1982.
 Agree Disagree

Christina Sophocleous-Jones
General Manager, Self-Isolation Pilot
MBIE

13/01/2022

Hon Chris Hipkins
Minister for the Covid-19 Response

29 / 1 / 2022

Background

1. You agreed the Evaluation Plan for the Self-Isolation Pilot [2122-1778 refers].
2. You have previously been provided with three interim reports [2122-2004, 2122-2118 and 2122-2242 refers]
3. The final report brings together the findings from these interim reports and updates them to include the entire pilot cohort. There are minor changes to numbers reported in prior reports due to the interim nature of the earlier data.

Key findings

4. The key findings of the evaluation are:
 - 79 participants successfully completed self-isolation through the pilot programme from 30 October to 18 December 2021.

Regarding the Application Process

- A two-stage expression of interest and ballot successfully identified 81 participants to trial home isolation as an alternative to MIQ, for a closely monitored approach to self-isolation. 79 individuals participated in the pilot.
- The strict criteria adopted for the pilot per Cabinet's agreement, including the requirement to isolate close to the port of arrival, meant that options for participation were severely limited for travellers living outside Auckland. There were few international flights scheduled into Christchurch (none from Australia and only from Singapore).

Regarding the Arrival Process and Transfer to self-isolation

- The processes to identify and separate self-isolating travellers from travellers going to managed isolation and quarantine (MIQ) worked effectively and smoothly.
- Airports put in place systems that would cater for the number of people expected to participate in the pilot. The small size of the pilot limited the extent to which systems were fully tested, as the highest number of arrivals was four on any flight.
- In Auckland, Rapid Antigen Testing was done for all pilot participants. The test extended the transfer time in the airport by 14-15 minutes for each individual.
- It is the view of the airports that undertaking COVID-19 testing at the border at scale is not operationally viable because of space constraints to safely accommodate large numbers of people being tested on-site, and the risks and costs of delays to passenger disembarkation if arrival halls are not cleared quickly.
- Overall, the use of commercial transport providers to drive participants to their place of self-isolation was highly successful with few incidents.

Regarding the participant experience of self-isolation

- The opportunity to travel internationally for business was valued by participants.
- Most participants were satisfied or very satisfied with their self-isolation experience.
- Most participants found the self-isolation experience easy. The key themes in the participant feedback were that the number of tests, the length of the required self-isolation

was perceived as excessive, and that the challenges became harder after the first few days, including being bored and lonely and separated from loved ones.

Regarding Health checks during self-isolation

- During their stay in self-isolation, regular saliva-PCR tests were taken. In Christchurch where health workers supervised the collection of the tests there were no insufficient samples. In Auckland, where tests were unsupervised, there were a small number (six) of insufficient tests. The implications of these observations need to be considered alongside experience from other situations where saliva testing is used.
- The pilot faced operational challenges from implementing a targeted programme at the same time as the nation-wide introduction of three days home isolation for travellers after seven days of MIQ, and increased demand for health support to deliver health checks for self-isolating community cases. In a wider roll-out the priority and mechanism for health checks for returnees will need to be weighed against other demands due to cases in the community.

Regarding Monitoring during self-isolation

- Monitoring of pilot participation was effective, with no breaches identified. However, the participant views on monitoring were varied, with some welcoming the daily interactions with the monitoring staff and others finding the phone calls intrusive.
- More advanced technological methods for tracking, using GPS tracking devices and other technologies were advocated for by some participants.
- From the perspective of the monitoring company the approach was a high-trust model, which relied on establishing a good relationship between the participant and the monitoring staff. This view aligns with participant views that it would be possible to evade the monitoring if you wanted to.

Regarding data collection and information sharing

- Multiple agency involvement requires that information is speedily, efficiently, and securely shared to facilitate a clear self-isolation pathway for travellers. Given the small scale of the pilot, the processes used were mostly manual.
- The model of self-isolation will determine the extent of information collection and sharing required, but to handle large volumes of travellers it will not be feasible to use manual processes. Manual processes are not only resource heavy but also introduce privacy and security risks as it is not possible to track and monitor all data access and use.
- Overall, while manual in nature, the information sharing processes put in place for the pilot worked well to ensure that all partner agencies received the information required for their part in the process.

Regarding Communications

- Communications using multiple methods were necessary to engage with stakeholders such as the airports and health services, iwi, partner agencies and pilot participants. The communications were effective because they used multiple digital channels, and because they could be revised to take account of the changes to the pilot requirements and in response to feedback as the pilot progressed.

Next Steps

5. With your agreement, the final report will be published on the Ministry of Business Innovation and Employment website in February 2022.

Annex One:

Summary report. Monitoring and Evaluation of the Self-Isolation pilot

The report can be found here: <https://www.mbie.govt.nz/dmsdocument/18738-self-isolation-pilot-summary-report>