



BRIEFING

MIQ post Step 2 RNZ: Suspending offline allocations and maintaining contingency for some groups in the short-term

Date:	17 March 2022	Priority:	High
Security classification:		Tracking number:	2122-3075

Action sought		
	Action sought	Deadline
Hon Chris Hipkins Minister for COVID-19 Response	<p>Agree to suspend time sensitive travel and emergency allocations from 25 March 2022.</p> <p>Agree that Afghanistan arrivals, quota refugees, and Pacific Island maritime crew continue to enter MIQ as a short-term transitional measure until 30 June 2022.</p> <p>Agree that other maritime crew continue to enter MIQ while further work is underway on greater alignment between maritime border and air border settings.</p>	21 March 2022

Contact for telephone discussion (if required)			
Name	Position	Telephone	1st contact
Privacy of natural persons	Policy Manager, Systems and Strategy, MIQ Policy	Privacy of natural persons	✓
	Senior Policy Advisor, MIQ Implementation and Regulations		
	Policy Advisor, MIQ Systems and Strategy		

The following departments/agencies have been consulted
Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (MFAT), Immigration New Zealand, Maritime New Zealand, 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 Withdrawn |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

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Purpose

This briefing seeks your agreement to use your power under the COVID-19 Public Health Response Act 2020 to revoke the criteria for emergency allocations and time sensitive travel allocations from 25 March 2022. It also recommends that Afghanistan arrivals, quota refugees and Pacific Island maritime crew continue to enter MIQ until 30 June 2022.

Recommended action

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

Reconnecting New Zealanders with the World

- a **Note** that on 14 March Cabinet agreed that eligible international arrivals to New Zealand who do not meet the definition of 'fully vaccinated' will no longer be required to undertake MIQ [CAB-22-MIN-0072 refers]. MIQ understands this decision will take effect from 11.59pm on 18 March 2022.

Noted

Changes to the offline allocations process

- b **Note** that given recent border changes there is no longer a need for MIQ offline allocation processes, which were a necessary feature of the system when demand for rooms significantly outstripped supply.

Noted

- c **Note** that the criteria for individual offline allocations are set by you as the Minister for COVID-19 Response, under section 32N of the COVID-19 Public Health Response Act 2020 (the Act).

Noted

- d **Agree** to revoke the eligibility criteria for Emergency Allocations and Time Sensitive Travel Allocations from 25 March 2022 and determine that no further eligibility criteria are required.

Agree / Disagree

- e **Note** that under section 32L of the Act, you must determine the apportionment between the issue of online and offline allocations.

Noted

- f **Agree** that from 30 June 2022, all managed isolation allocations will be online allocations, effectively suspending all offline group allocations.

Agree / Disagree

Transitioning certain groups from MIQ

g **Note** that since the requirement to self-isolate was removed for vaccinated travellers, MIQ has been relying on contractual arrangements to allow travellers to enter MIQ that are not otherwise required to.

Noted

h **Note** that Immigration New Zealand and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade have requested that quota refugees, Afghanistan arrivals, and Pacific Island maritime crew continue to be accommodated in MIQ until 30 June 2022.

Noted

i **Agree** to continue to allow the following groups to enter MIQ until 30 June 2022 as a transitional measure:

a. Afghanistan arrivals

Agree / Disagree

b. Quota Refugees

Agree / Disagree

c. Pacific Island maritime crew.

Agree / Disagree

j **Note** that other maritime crew continue to be able to enter MIQ facilities until further decisions are made to align the requirements of the maritime border with wider border settings (expected by the end of March).

Noted

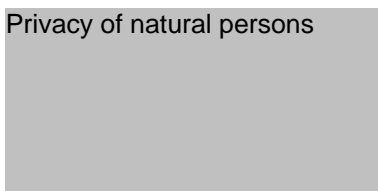
k **Note** that on 8 February 2022, you agreed that overseas aircrew would be allowed to enter MIQ until airlines could pick up hotel contracts [HR 20220090 refers] and we expect that aircrew will transition from using MIQ facilities in April.

Noted

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

Agree / Disagree

Privacy of natural persons



Policy Manager, MIQ Policy
MIQ, MBIE

..... / /

Hon Chris Hipkins
Minister for COVID-19 Response

20 / 03 / 2022

Background

- 1 Managed Isolation and Quarantine (MIQ) was set up as a public health response to COVID-19 in March 2020. The justification to require people to isolate in a managed isolation facility (MIF) on arrival to New Zealand has relied heavily on strong public health advice that MIQ was a proportionate response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Implementation of Reconnecting New Zealand Steps 1 and 2

- 2 On 28 February 2022, Cabinet considered updated health advice on border settings and agreed that ‘fully vaccinated’ international travellers to New Zealand will no longer be required to self-isolate on arrival or be in MIQ, with the following timing:
 - 2.1 for New Zealanders and other travellers under current immigration settings arriving from Australia – from 11.59pm Wednesday 2 March 2022 (Step 1)
 - 2.2 for New Zealanders and other travellers under current immigration settings arriving from other countries – from 11.59pm Friday 4 March 2022 (Step 2), brought forward from, 11.59pm Sunday 13 March) [CAB-22-MIN-0050 refers].
- 3 On 14 March 2022, Cabinet agreed to bring forward reopening to:
 - 3.1 Australian citizens and permanent residents arriving from anywhere in the world to align with Step 2, from 11.59pm on 12 April 2022; and
 - 3.2 Visa-waiver travellers and existing holders of valid visitor visas (both onshore and offshore) to commence from 11.59pm on 1 May 2022 [CAB-22-MIN-0072 refers].
- 4 Cabinet also agreed that eligible international arrivals to New Zealand who do not meet the definition of ‘fully vaccinated’ will no longer be required to undertake MIQ [Cab minute CAB-22-MIN-0072 refers]. Cabinet did not decide the timing that this decision would come into effect, but MIQ understands that, at this stage, it is intended to take effect from 11.59pm on 18 March 2022.

MIQ operationalisation of RNZ Step 2

- 5 Following Cabinet’s 28 February 2022 decision, on 5 March 2022, MIQ released 950 travellers from MIQ facilities that had arrived in New Zealand from countries other than Australia. However, 105 people who were eligible for release remained in a MIF up to their full seven day stay. This group was made up of mariners and Afghanistan arrivals (that were vaccinated), and other travellers that required time to arrange their onward travel (and requested to remain). Only 33 travellers were unable to be released due to not meeting vaccination requirements.
- 6 MIQ also allowed a cohort of US Antarctic Programme travellers to remain in a MIF for 10 days. This group was the last of the US Antarctic Programme travellers expected this for the 2021/22 Antarctic season.
- 7 In response to Cabinet’s decision regarding travellers who do not meet the definition of ‘fully vaccinated’, MIQ is currently preparing for the release of these travellers on the determined date (as noted in para 4, we understand that to be 11.59pm on 18 March). We are therefore planning to release these travellers on Saturday, 19 March.
- 8 We expect that once all relevant travellers have been released, the only people that will remain in MIQ will be:
 - 8.1 community cases [2122-3031 refers],

- 8.2 travellers that are required to stay in a place of isolation or quarantine under the COVID-19 Public Health Response (Maritime Border) Order (No 2) 2020 (the Maritime Border Order), and
- 8.3 travellers that are authorised by MIQ to voluntarily enter a MIF.

Decommissioning of MIQ facilities

- 9 On 9 March 2022, Cabinet agreed to consolidate the current network of 32 MIQ facilities into four facilities by 30 June 2022 (three in Auckland and one in Christchurch) and extend contracts for these facilities until December 2022 [SWC-22-MIN-0032 refers]. Once this decision has been implemented, capacity will be reduced significantly while the border demand for MIQ spaces will be almost non-existent.

Changes to the Group allocations process

Allocations processes in light of RNZ

- 10 The group and sector allocations process is an offline allocation process that was set up in February 2021 to manage increasing demand for managed isolation places.
- 11 To date, MIQ held contingency spaces each month for sports and culture groups (40 rooms), Ministerial travel (20 rooms), health workers (300 rooms), construction accord, NZTE Exporters (90 rooms), maritime crew (80 rooms including 28 rooms for Pacific crew), and other groups can submit EOIs for allocations. The Border Exceptions Ministerial Groups (BEMG) (led by the Minister of Immigration) was responsible for approving the group and sector allocation packages in two-month blocks.
- 12 In February 2022, you agreed to a March-May group allocation package for these groups, as a contingency, in the event that self-isolation was not available [2122-2286 refers], and subsequently agreed to allow some groups and people to enter MIQ even if they were otherwise eligible to self-isolate [2122-2647 refers].
- 13 Other offline allocation processes include time-sensitive travel allocations for workers travelling to New Zealand to undertake time-sensitive work that will have significant consequences if not completed (800 rooms over a two-month period), and emergency allocations (800 rooms per month) for travellers with an urgent need to return to New Zealand and are unable to obtain a voucher through the Managed Isolation Allocation System (MIAS).
- 14 In-light of reduced demand, on 2 March 2022, MIQ reverted to its previous self-service model for MIAS booking, with no further lobby releases [2122-2808]. This means that travellers can log onto the MIAS system and secure a booking at any time instead of waiting for lobby releases.
- 15 Because travellers can now secure MIAS bookings online themselves, and there is almost no border demand for MIQ, offline allocations are almost entirely redundant.

Suspending all offline allocations from 30 June 2022

- 16 Section 32N of the COVID-19 Public Health Response Act 2020 (the Act) provides that the Minister is responsible for determining group offline allocations on the basis of the eligibility criteria, while the Chief Executive of MBIE is responsible for individual offline allocations (which includes emergency allocations and time sensitive travel) based on eligibility criteria determined by the Minister.

- 17 Under section 32L of the Act, the apportionment between online allocations and offline allocations must be determined by the Minister for COVID-19 Response.
- 18 Currently, anyone with a visa to enter the country has access to online allocations and as a result of RNZ Steps 1 and 2, the availability of online vouchers significantly exceeds demand. There are also currently no active emergency allocation requests (EARs) down from approximately 850 about six weeks ago prior to Step 1 of RNZ.
- 19 Therefore, we are seeking your agreement to 'suspend' the offline allocation process, indefinitely, by:
- 19.1 Revoking the eligibility criteria for emergency and time sensitive travel allocations from 25 March 2022 and determining that no further eligibility criteria is needed; and
- 19.2 Setting the apportionment of managed isolation allocations so that all allocations are online allocations from 30 June 2022.
- 20 If you agree to 'suspend' this process, from 30 June 2022 all managed isolation allocations will be online allocations, giving effect to this intention.
- 21 In the event that circumstances require the offline allocations process to be reinstated, we will provide you advice on how to make the changes in the apportionment between online and offline allocations and re-establish eligibility criteria for individual offline allocations.
- 22 Subject to your decision, MBIE will update its website to reflect the changes and direct applicants to MIAS, where they will be able to obtain a voucher. MBIE will keep the customer portal live until the settings are changed.

Authorising travellers to enter MIQ if they are otherwise not required to isolate

- 23 On 14 March, Cabinet agreed that MIQ would be able to authorise travellers to enter MIQ, under the COVID-19 Public Health Response (Air Border) Order 2021 (the Air Border Order), that are not required to isolate on arrival. We expect this new provision to apply for arrivals from 11.59pm on Friday 18 March [CAB-22-MIN-0072 refers].
- 24 This new provision mirrors existing powers for MIQ to authorise travellers otherwise required to self-isolate (no travellers have this requirement currently) and overseas-based aircrew to use MIQ facilities, even though they were not required to isolate on arrival [HR 20220090 refers]. We expect airlines to utilise this provision until they can negotiate contracts with facilities that come off the MIQ network. Based on current decommissioning timeframes, this is expected to occur over April 2022. We will provide a further update on this transition.
- 25 Since the requirement to self-isolate was removed for travellers in early March 2022 (and MIQ no longer had a relevant Air Border Order power to allow travellers into MIFs), MIQ has been relying on contractual arrangements to allow travellers to enter MIQ that are not otherwise required to. Notably, this been used to allow vaccinated Afghanistan arrivals and maritime crew that are not otherwise required to enter MIQ.

Transitioning certain groups from MIQ

- 26 In the absence of a public health justification that requires travellers to isolate in a MIF on arrival in New Zealand, MIQ is arguably no longer viewed as a preventative border measure. With most facilities coming off the MIQ network in the next few months, we expect that there will also be alternative accommodation arrangements available to groups.

Agreement to allow specific groups to enter MIQ

- 27 We are seeking your agreement to continue to allow specific groups (as set out below) to enter MIQ in the interim. If you agree, we have determined that they will be able to come into MIQ until 30 June 2022. This approach is supported by Immigration New Zealand (INZ) and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (MFAT). This is intended as a transitional measure while MIQ works with sector agencies to transition these groups into non-MIQ arrangements. It is not a requirement that these groups come into MIQ until 30 June. Agencies may make alternative arrangements for them at any time.
- 28 We will have capacity across the network from now until 30 June 2022 to provide for the expected number of arrivals across these groups. However, from mid-May planning for all border arrivals going into MIQ will be consolidated down into the four core facilities as all the rest will be in the final decommissioning stages.

Afghanistan arrivals

- 29 We recommend that Afghanistan arrivals continue to enter MIQ until 30 June 2022. Afghanistan arrivals currently enter MIQ for seven days before being transferred to the Afghan Resettlement Facilities. Vaccinated Afghanistan arrivals are not required to enter MIQ, however, MIQ has continued to allow them to enter (via contractual arrangements, see below) since Step 2 took effect. INZ has requested flexibility for Afghanistan arrivals to continue to come into MIQ to reduce the risk of COVID-19 spreading in their Resettlement Facilities.
- 30 We understand that MFAT has provided relevant Ministers with advice regarding the need to phase down MFAT support for travellers from Afghanistan as the number of those eligible for assistance to travel to New Zealand continues to decrease. It is expected that approximately a further 300 Afghanistan eligible visa holders will enter MIQ by 30 April with very few expected to arrive beyond that date. As of 14 March 2022, 418 eligible visa holders remain offshore.
- 31 If you agree that this group continues to enter MIQ in the interim, Afghanistan arrivals will be transitioned from entering MIQ on arrival to New Zealand to going directly into Afghan Resettlement Facilities by 30 June 2022. This change aligns with the wind-down of MFAT's Afghanistan operations.

Quota refugees

- 32 We recommend that quota refugees continue to enter MIQ until 30 June 2022.
- 33 Refugees currently enter MIQ for seven days before being transferred to Te Āhuru Mōwai o Aotearoa (aka Mangere Refugee Resettlement Centre). Because refugees largely do not meet vaccination requirements, they are currently required to come to MIQ (until the requirement that they are fully vaccinated changes).
- 34 However, INZ advises that it anticipates difficulties transferring refugees into Te Āhuru Mōwai o Aotearoa without an MIQ buffer, once the vaccination requirement is removed, and has requested that quota refugees continue to enter MIQ until the end of June. For one, most of the new arrivals are largely unvaccinated and a small proportion of quota refugees have tested positive for COVID-19 on arrival. It is also difficult to isolate COVID-19-positive travellers at Te Āhuru Mōwai o Aotearoa because of the communal nature of the facilities such as the shared dining hall.
- 35 There are approximately a total of 320 refugees due to arrive by the end of June. INZ has confirmed that increased vaccination offshore and a rearrangement of the Resettlement

Centre will allow it to more easily accept refugees directly. The Resettlement Centre will need three to four weeks preparation time if refugees are no longer entering MIQ.

Pacific Island maritime crew (arriving over the air border)

- 36 We recommend that Pacific Island maritime crew continue to enter MIQ until 30 June 2022.
- 37 Pacific island maritime crew usually fly into New Zealand seven days prior to joining their ship with onward travel into the Pacific. We allow them to enter MIQ facilities for seven days, which supports Pacific resilience by slowing the spread of COVID-19 and minimising any disruption to vital supply chains into the region.
- 38 The numbers of Pacific Island crew members entering MIQ is variable, between four and 32 per month.

Maritime crew (arriving over the air border)

- 39 We recommend that maritime crew continue to use MIQ facilities until further decisions are made on the Maritime Border Order that clearly outline the requirements and responsibilities for this group (expected by the end of March).
- 40 Currently, ship crew who arrive in New Zealand by air that are transferring directly to a ship are explicitly exempt from isolation or quarantine requirements. After they arrive by air, the Maritime Border Order applies to them until they travel to their ship. The Maritime Border Order states that if the ship does not depart as soon as reasonably practicable, they may be transferred to MIQ for up to seven days. The Maritime Border Order conflicts with the Air Border Order in this scenario and differs to the previous position where maritime crew arriving via the air border have previously entered MIQ when required for a short stay (one to four days) before joining their departing ship.
- 41 The Ministry of Health and the Border Executive Board are undertaking work to ensure greater alignment between air and maritime border settings. The initial work plan will be provided to the RNZ Ministerial group by 21 March 2022.
- 42 The numbers of maritime crew doing short MIQ stays is variable, between 20 - 200 travellers per month. Shipping agents have requested that they are provided with at least two weeks' preparation time if maritime crew no longer enter MIQ.
- 43 If alignment between the border settings is not achieved by the end of March, then there may be an ongoing requirement to allow maritime crew into MIQ. In that event, we will provide you with further advice on the options available.

Ukrainian arrivals

- 44 On 14 March 2022, Cabinet agreed to a special immigration policy to allow Ukrainian-born New Zealanders to sponsor family members in the Ukraine to apply for temporary entry to New Zealand [CAB-22-MIN-0069]. Ukrainian arrivals are not expected to require MIQ once the requirement to be 'fully vaccinated' has been removed and because their sponsors would be responsible for their accommodation requirements in New Zealand.
- 45 The numbers of Ukrainian arrivals is currently unknown, but INZ has estimated up to 4000 people could be eligible to enter the country. We will work with other agencies to contribute to any further advice on Ukrainian arrivals where there may be implications for MIQ.