



BRIEFING

Offline prioritisation function to complement the Managed Isolation Allocation System (MIAS)

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|---------------------------------|-------------------|-------------------------|-----------|
| Date: | 24 September 2020 | Priority: | Medium |
| Security classification: | | Tracking number: | 2021-0830 |

| Action sought | | |
|--|--|-------------------|
| | Action sought | Deadline |
| Hon Dr Megan Woods Minister of Housing | Agree to the recommendations in this paper, and forward to relevant Ministers. | 28 September 2020 |
| Hon Chris Hipkins Minister of Health | Copy for information | |
| Hon Kris Faafoi Minister of Immigration | Copy for information | |
| Hon Phil Twyford Minister of Transport | Copy for information | |
| Hon Winston Peters Minister of Foreign Affairs | Copy for information | |

| Contact for telephone discussion (if required) | | | |
|--|---|----------------------------|-------------|
| Name | Position | Telephone | 1st contact |
| Privacy of natural persons | Policy Manager, Managed Isolation and Quarantine Unit | Privacy of natural persons | ✓ |
| Melleny Black | General Manager Policy, Managed Isolation and Quarantine Unit | | |

| The following departments/agencies have been consulted |
|--|
| Crown Law, Ministry of Transport, Ministry of Health, Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Immigration New Zealand, New Zealand Customs Service, The Treasury, New Zealand Defence Force |

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 Withdrawn |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 seeks your agreement to the design parameters for an 'offline' prioritisation function to complement MIAS, which will allow officials to allocate a ring-fenced proportion of places in managed isolation facilities manually to travellers, based on urgency and need.

Executive summary

When MIAS goes 'live' on 5 October it will be as a minimum viable product (MVP) and therefore will have limited functionality. It will not be able to prioritise New Zealanders over non-New Zealanders for placement into managed isolation facilities. The online system will also not be able to differentiate between users on the basis of urgency or need, allocating places in managed isolation on a 'first-come first-served' basis. To build flexibility into the system and ensure that emergency travel can continue to be facilitated, and that New Zealanders do not start to face unreasonable delays when returning to New Zealand, 10 percent of places in managed isolation facilities are proposed to be ring-fenced for 'offline' manual allocation by officials and 80 percent allocated online via MIAS. The remaining 10 percent would continue to be held for contingencies.

Travellers who find that there are no places in managed isolation available online at the time that they want to travel and which have a legitimate or urgent need to travel on, or by, a specific date, will be able to submit a request to be allocated one of these 'offline' places. Assessors evaluating applications for 'offline' placement will assess these on a 'case-by-case' basis, taking into account a number of factors, including whether the requester is a New Zealander, the reason for travel, the time-critical nature of the request, and a person's vulnerability. For operational or efficiency reasons, it is anticipated there will always be some categories of people that will need to be manually allocated a place in managed isolation 'offline' – these include, for example, foreign diplomats, maritime arrivals, and those arriving into New Zealand by military transport.

Recommended action

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

- a **Note** MBIE intends to implement the Managed Isolation and Allocation System (MIAS) on 5 October 2020. Noted
- b **Note** you previously agreed MBIE would develop an offline prioritisation function for the primary purpose of ensuring New Zealanders do not face unreasonable delays when entering New Zealand [Briefing 2021-0552 refers]. Noted
- c **Agree** in principle the objectives to underpin implementation of the offline prioritisation function: timely and efficient; fair and equitable; agile and flexible and to protect the health, wellbeing and safety of people entering New Zealand. Agree Disagree

d **Agree** the factors to guide the assessment of requests for 'offline' placement into managed isolation: citizenship/visa status, waiting time, the time critical nature (or reason) of the request, and vulnerability.

Agree / Disagree

e **Note** that we expect an increase in demand for places in managed isolation from New Zealanders seeking to return home before Christmas.

Noted

f **Agree** that initially 80 percent of capacity in managed isolation is made available online, 10 percent is reserved for offline allocation, and the remaining 10 percent is held for contingencies and business continuity purposes.

Agree / Disagree

g **Agree** that the percentage of places put aside for the offline prioritisation function is regularly reviewed.

Agree / Disagree


h **Note** the key messages in Annex One that can be drawn on to talk about the offline prioritisation function.

Noted



Megan Main
Deputy Chief Executive
Managed Isolation and Quarantine Unit

24/09/20



Hon Dr Megan Woods
Minister of Housing

05 / 10 / 2020

Background

1. The Managed Isolation Allocation System (MIAS) is a web-based platform that has been developed to make it easier to manage the placement of people arriving into New Zealand into Managed Isolation Facilities (MIFs). It will provide an automated process for securing a place in a MIF for air travellers and generate a voucher as proof of MIF placement. An amendment to the COVID-19 Public Health Response (Air Border) Order will make the presentation of a MIF voucher before boarding a flight to New Zealand a legal requirement from 3 November.
2. Initially MIAS will not be able to prioritise certain cohorts of people for placement into MIFs. This means all MIF places available through MIAS will be allocated on a 'first-come first-served' basis, with the system not able to prioritise New Zealanders over non-New Zealanders for placement. Proposed enhancements to MIAS will look to address this, but this functionality will not be available when the system goes 'live' on 5 October.
3. New Zealand citizens have a right to return under Section 18 of the New Zealand Bill of Rights Act 1990 and most residence class visa holders also have a right to enter under the Immigration Act 2009. This right of return might be negatively impacted if New Zealanders started to experience lengthy delays when trying to secure a place in managed isolation, with
Legal professional privilege
Legal professional privilege A further risk arises if the reason for the delay is because non-New Zealanders are filling up places in managed isolation and preventing New Zealanders from being able to secure a place.
4. You previously agreed that to mitigate this risk, and to address the wider need to facilitate emergency travel, a proportion of places in managed isolation would be held offline (Briefing 2021-0552 refers). This briefing seeks your agreement to the broad design parameters for the offline prioritisation function, including:
 - Objectives to underpin implementation;
 - Factors to be considered to help guide the assessment of requests for offline places; and
 - The proportion of places to be made available online via MIAS and the proportion to be allocated offline.

Objectives to underpin an 'offline' prioritisation function

5. MBIE proposes the following objectives to underpin the implementation of the offline prioritisation function:
 - **Timely and efficient:** People with a legitimate need are placed into managed isolation in a timely and efficient way.
 - **Fair and equitable:** Decisions on the allocation of offline places are made fairly and equitably, taking into account the legal right of New Zealand citizens and permanent residents to return and equitable access for Māori in line with the principles and obligations provided by Te Tiriti o Waitangi.
 - **Agile and flexible:** Places can be moved online or offline to respond to changing demand for managed isolation and to strike the balance between maximising utilisation and prioritising those most in need.
 - **Protect the health, wellbeing and safety of people entering New Zealand:** Decisions on the allocation of offline places also takes into account an individual traveller's circumstances, including whether they have any vulnerabilities (e.g. financial, a mental health condition or physical disability or injury).

6. These objectives have been informed by, and align with, Aotearoa/New Zealand’s COVID-19 Elimination Strategy.¹

Placement of people into managed isolation using the ‘offline’ channel

A manual online application-based process

7. While most air travellers should be able to secure their place in a MIF via the online system, there will be some who find there are no places available for when they need to travel. Should an individual believe they have a legitimate and/or urgent reason to enter managed isolation on, or by, a specific date and there are no places available online, they will have the option of filling out an online application form and submitting a request for offline prioritisation. A team within the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment (MBIE) is being established to process these applications.

Factors to guide the assessment of applications for ‘offline’ places

8. Once applications for ‘offline’ allocation are received, assessors will prioritise these on the basis of need and urgency. In making these assessments, we propose the below list of factors be taken into account.² Assessors will also weigh wider contextual factors, such as the number of requests received for a given period, and the future availability of MIF places online in MIAS.

Table 1: Factors to guide the assessment of requests for offline places

| | | |
|---------------|--|---|
| Waiting time | New Zealand citizens have a right to return under the New Zealand Bill of Rights Act 1990, and most residence class visa holders have a right to enter under the Immigration Act 2009, and should not experience lengthy delays. New Zealand also has international legal obligations to facilitate the entry of some foreign nationals (e.g. under treaty status government-to-government Antarctic cooperation agreements). | |
| Time critical | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Urgent need for medical treatment (traveller or accompanying family member) • For their mental well-being (traveller or accompanying family member) • Other risk to their health, safety or well-being (traveller or accompanying family member) • Grieve with family following the death of a close family member • Spend time with a close family member at the end of their life or support a close family member through serious illness or accident • Required to commence employment or a long-term study programme by a certain date (e.g. seasonal workers and critical workers) • They cannot legally remain in their country of residence beyond a fixed date (e.g. because their visa will expire) • Unpredictable travel options: Travelling from or connecting through a location with infrequent, unpredictable or sporadic transport options • Urgent need to address humanitarian or development concerns in the Pacific. (For example, a humanitarian incident in the Pacific may require prolonged, but difficult to plan for, back and forth movement between New Zealand and the Pacific. Critical workers may also be needed to address an infrastructure failure in a Pacific Island Country). | |
| Vulnerability | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vulnerability (with regard to the traveller/a family member travelling with them) • Health conditions or injury | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diagnosed mental health condition • Disability • Financial hardship |

9. Only those with a genuine need will be able to be facilitated through this mechanism. We do not want to create a perverse incentive where someone who could have secured a place in managed isolation, with a bit of forward planning, is given a place over someone who needs to travel to New Zealand at short notice due to an emergency or other unplanned event. Individuals (outside of emergency travel or other unforeseen circumstances) will have to

¹ Aotearoa/New Zealand’s COVID-19 Elimination Strategy: An Overview, 7 April 2020.

² This includes for citizens of Samoa and Tonga making essential travel to New Zealand where this travel has been officially requested by the Government of Samoa or Tonga, and this request has been formally approved by the New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade.

show that they have tried to plan ahead, but have been unable to secure a place in managed isolation due to high demand.

For operational or efficiency reasons, some types of people will always need to be manually allocated a place in managed isolation 'offline' by MBIE staff

10. In addition to the application-based process outlined above, the following categories of people have been identified that will likely need manual placement into managed isolation 'offline' by officials. These are:

- **People who try to check-in at the airport without a voucher:** We expect that during the MIAS grace period from 5 October to 2 November, and to a lesser extent afterwards, some people will be unaware of the need for a voucher and will arrive at the airport requiring placement into a MIF³. Immigration Border Operations (IBO) will be able to allocate a voucher to those arriving at the airport with an immediate travel need.

Foreign diplomats and consular personnel and New Zealand government staff and families deployed offshore: Foreign diplomatic and consular personnel will need to continue to be placed into managed isolation by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (MFAT) offline, as this group cannot be obliged to enter managed isolation. If offline places are not available for foreign diplomats, there is a risk that fewer of them will choose to enter into managed isolation, increasing the public health risk. While most New Zealand government staff will be expected to secure a place in managed isolation via MIAS, some may need to be placed into managed isolation manually offline at short notice and/or when there is no availability in MIAS and there are operational imperatives for doing so. Retaining the government's ability to rotate people to and from offshore roles, is critical to maintaining New Zealand's offshore network.

- **Military or other government transport:** Passengers arriving by military transport (whether by air or sea), or on aircraft or vessels chartered by governments other than for repatriation purposes, may not have a flight number to be able to generate a voucher via MIAS. Additionally, for some of these transports, the planned arrival dates may be time critical, but not fixed due to operational reasons (e.g. flights from Antarctica, which can be weather-dependent), requiring flexibility to place passengers into managed isolation offline at short notice. Larger groups arriving by military or other government transport would be handled in accordance with the separate 'large groups' process detailed overleaf.
- **Urgent and humanitarian arrivals:** Some passengers may arrive at the border under urgency, and without the ability to generate a voucher via MIAS, including as part of a medical evacuation (e.g. a patient or a medical attendant) or search and rescue operation, requiring placement into managed isolation facilities at short notice.
- **Air crew:** As of 28 September, all overseas-based air crew, other than those who remain airside, are required to spend the duration of their layovers in New Zealand in a Managed Isolation and Quarantine facility. Placement of individuals will be done 'offline' by MIQ Operations.

11. Further categories of people might emerge over time requiring manual 'offline' allocation and will be added to the list above to ensure there is a streamlined process for placing people into managed isolation, especially those already approved or eligible for entry into New Zealand.

Maritime arrivals and large groups will need to be treated separately

12. Large groups of travellers arriving together on the same flight or vessel (e.g. passengers arriving by government-organised repatriation flights or privately-organised charters), as is the case at the moment, will need to continue to be allocated places in managed isolation through a bespoke offline process working directly with MIQ Operations. This reflects that

³ We will look to mitigate this by running an extensive international public awareness campaign.

groups consisting of 100 or more passengers would be challenging (due to current MIAS functionality constraints) to fit into managed isolation using the online platform. We have provided you with separate advice on how to accommodate these large groups in managed isolation, including our advice that these groups be dealt with on a case-by-case basis and outside of the 10 percent allocated to the offline prioritisation function. This is because large groups could potentially reduce our ability to accommodate returning New Zealanders (Briefing 2021-0893 refers). Large groups granted a class exception by Ministers are likely to be facilitated through this large groups' process.

13. Similar to large groups, maritime arrivals have a layer of complexity requiring special treatment and a dedicated quota⁴ of places in managed isolation outside of the 10 percent of places proposed for the offline prioritisation function. This is because those arriving at the border by sea, do not always arrive when scheduled, and their isolation time can vary with short periods of notice.

Christmas expected to be a period of peak demand, especially for 'offline' places

14. When MIAS goes 'live' in October, initially we expect there will be low numbers of requests from travellers wanting to access one of the 'offline' places, but as awareness of this channel grows (including through social media), this might change. Notably, in the lead up to Christmas, which we know will be a period of peak demand, we anticipate receiving a high volume of requests for 'offline' manual allocation as the places available online via MIAS are snapped up. To mitigate this risk, MBIE will develop some key messages for a public information campaign so that New Zealanders and other travellers understand that it is only in exceptional circumstances that they will be placed into a MIF using the offline prioritisation function. This information will also be provided on the MIAS website and cover:
 - Legitimate reasons for submitting a request and relevant examples; and
 - The process for submitting a request, including the length of time people can expect to wait before hearing the outcome.

The proportion of places to be available 'online' versus 'offline'

15. To help manage the placement of people listed in the categories above, as well as the processing of requests, MBIE has collated indicative data on flows of people coming into the country over the next couple of months in the above categories, to inform the number of offline places required. While this has helped to inform our advice, there are significant limitations with the data owing to the fact that people's behaviour is difficult to predict.
16. Pragmatically, there is a balance to be struck between the risk of receiving high numbers of offline requests due to limited online availability, and the risk of having too many places available online, limiting the ability to prioritise the use of MIF spaces.
17. With this in mind, we recommend that initially as we transition to MIAS that 80 percent of national capacity be made available online through MIAS, and 20 percent kept offline. As seen in Table 2, the offline proportion includes approximately 10 percent for the offline prioritisation function⁵ and approximately 10 percent for contingencies and business continuity.
18. Officials will regularly review the proportion of places to be used for offline prioritisation. A range of factors will affect the number of MIF places that need to be allocated offline, including:
 - Lower numbers of people using MIAS initially, and needing to be placed into managed isolation offline at short notice (including turning up without a voucher at airports).
 - Increased awareness of the new online platform over time resulting in greater compliance;

⁴ This dedicated quota equates to 60 rooms per day that can be used by maritime arrivals

⁵ Based on current MIQ capacity, this would mean that around 41 people per day could be allocated a place in managed isolation via the offline prioritisation function.

- An increase in demand for places in managed isolation due to changes to immigration settings; and
- An increase or decrease in demand for ‘time critical’ managed isolation requests requiring offline processing.

Table 2: Indicative proportions of places online and offline for managed isolation

| | | | |
|--------------------------|---------------------------------|--|-----|
| Online | MIAS | Places available online | 80% |
| Offline (20%) | Offline prioritisation function | Formal requests - places to be used for successful requests | 10% |
| | | Identified categories of people needing to be placed into managed isolation | |
| | Contingencies | Places needed in the event of an evacuation of a MIF e.g. in the case of a fire or earthquake. | 10% |

Future MIAS enhancements will likely reduce reliance on the ‘offline’ channel

19. Once enhancements to MIAS are made in the future, it is anticipated that there will be less of a need to rely on this offline function, as we will have the ability to ring-fence places for New Zealanders online in MIAS that only New Zealanders will be able to book. This will help reduce the risk that visa-holders might start displacing New Zealanders in managed isolation.
20. Decisions around how ‘far out’ (e.g. three or four months) MIAS users can view and book MIF places will have an impact on how quickly officials can adjust the number of spaces allocated to the offline function, if needed. Officials will provide you with further advice on this design choice as part of the next briefing on enhancements to the MIAS system.

Cost of implementation

21. There will be additional operating costs associated with implementing this new offline prioritisation function, including ensuring that we have sufficient personnel to be able to process the volume of requests anticipated during the initial phase. Over time, while enhanced MIAS functionality should decrease the volume of requests for offline allocation, there will still be a residual and ongoing need to be able to place some people and groups into managed isolation offline, requiring some associated personnel and processing costs to be built into MBIE’s sustainable operating model for MIQ.

Public communications

22. Subject to your agreement to the parameters for the offline prioritisation function, we suggest that some of the key messages below (and outlined in more detail in Annex One) be drawn on to build awareness of this ‘offline’ channel across government and the general public. We will also look to use MFAT’s network of offshore posts and safe travel messaging system to amplify public communications, so that New Zealanders looking to return home are made aware of this ‘offline’ channel, in the case of genuine need and emergencies.
 - From 5 October, all travellers to New Zealand should use the new Managed Isolation Allocation System to ensure there is a place available for them in managed isolation from their intended arrival date, before booking flights.
 - Most people should be able to secure their place in managed isolation using this new online tool.
 - When checking the system, some people may find that there aren’t any places available in managed isolation on the date they need to travel. If there are no available places in managed isolation on your required date, check to see if there are any places available on another nearby date.

- We will hold some places in reserve offline that people will be able to access if they have a legitimate reason to enter managed isolation on, or by, a specific date.
- To access one of these offline places, travellers will need to complete and submit an online request form. These requests will be assessed based on a number of factors, including the reason for travel and the urgency of the request.
- Under the new system, New Zealand citizens and residence class visa holders will be less likely to experience unreasonable delays when returning to New Zealand, because we will have the flexibility to assign them one of these offline places, if needed.

Next steps

23. Subject to your agreement, MBIE will look at what is needed to operationalise the offline prioritisation function so that when MIAS goes 'live' on 5 October there will be a process in place to prioritise urgent requests and a way for the public to be able to submit an online application. Public communications about the process will also be made available on the MIAS website and disseminated through MFAT's post network.

Annexes

Annex One: Key Messages

Annex One: Key Messages: Offline prioritisation function to complement MIAS

- All travellers to New Zealand are required to stay in managed isolation for at least 14 days with very limited exceptions.
- From 5 October, all travellers to New Zealand should use the new web-based Managed Isolation Allocation System to ensure there is a place available for them in managed isolation from their intended arrival date, before booking flights.
- Most people should be able to secure their place in managed isolation using this new online tool.
- The system will generate a voucher to confirm a traveller's place in a managed isolation facility.
- Travellers will be asked by airlines to present this voucher at check-in or when boarding their flight to New Zealand.
- There will be an initial one-month grace period from when the system will be available online, and before having a voucher will become a legal requirement.
- During this grace period you will still be able to travel to New Zealand and will be accommodated in a managed isolation facility on arrival, even if you do not have a voucher.
- When checking the system online, some people may find that there aren't any places available in managed isolation on the date they need to travel. If there are no available places in managed isolation on your required date, check to see if there are any places available on another nearby date.
- We will hold some places in reserve offline that people will be able to access if they have a legitimate and/or urgent reason to enter managed isolation on, or by, a specific date.
- To access one of these offline places, travellers will need to complete an online request form, which will be assessed based on a number of factors, including the reason for travel and the urgency of the request.
- Under the new system, New Zealand citizens and residence class visa holders will be less likely to experience unreasonable delays when returning to New Zealand, because we will have the flexibility to assign them one of these offline places, if needed.
- There may also be some instances where we will need to use this offline function to place certain groups of people into managed isolation. This includes foreign diplomats and personnel returning from Antarctica.

Q&A

What if the date I need is unavailable in MIAS?

If you need to travel to New Zealand on, or by, a specified date and there are no places available in MIAS in an acceptable time range, please complete the online request form to be assessed for an emergency place.

What happens if my request is accepted?

If your request is accepted you will be allocated a place in managed isolation and issued a voucher.

What can I do if my request is declined?

If your request is declined and you don't agree with the outcome you can lodge a complaint.

How are places allocated for special types of situations?

A number of places in managed isolation are also ring-fenced for special types of situations outside of business as usual such as for foreign diplomats or personnel returning from Antarctica.

You let a large group in – did they take up places other people could have got?

Large and very large groups go through a separate approval and allocations process.

How do you ensure requests are assessed fairly and equitably?

Requests for offline prioritisation will be assessed on a case-by-case basis, taking into account each person's individual circumstances and reasons for travel. There is no one rule that applies to everyone and the team processing the requests will take into account a number of factors, including waiting times for managed isolation, a person's vulnerability and/or need to enter into New Zealand by a specific date.

Will you ever cancel a booking because someone else has a more urgent need?

No.