



BRIEFING

Final MIQ lobby release and reverting to self-service room bookings

Date:	22 February 2022	Priority:	High
Security classification:		Tracking number:	2122-2808

Action sought		
	Action sought	Deadline
Hon Chris Hipkins Minister for COVID-19 Response	<p>Note that a lobby release of approximately 4,500 rooms is planned for February, March and April on Thursday, 24 February</p> <p>Note that MIQ will revert to the previous self-service model for Managed Isolation Allocation System bookings after the lobby release.</p> <p>Indicate whether you wish to announce this change or not.</p>	25 February 2022

Contact for telephone discussion (if required)			
Name	Position	Telephone	1st contact
Kara Isaac	General Manager, MIQ Policy	Privacy of natural persons	✓
Privacy of natural persons	Senior Policy Advisor, System and Strategy Policy		

The following departments/agencies have been consulted
N/A

Minister's office to complete:

Approved

Declined

Noted

Needs change

Seen

Overtaken by Events

See Minister's Notes

Withdrawn

Comments



BRIEFING

Final MIQ lobby release and reverting to self-service room bookings

Date:	22 February 2022	Priority:	High
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Purpose

To notify you that MIQ will revert to the self-service model for Managed Isolation Allocation System (MIAS) bookings after a lobby release of 4,500 rooms on Thursday, 24 February, given substantially reduced demand for vouchers. .

Recommended action

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

- a **Note** that the MIAS lobby was introduced at a time when demand for MIQ rooms significantly exceeded the supply available. *Noted*
- b **Note** that the lobby release on 17 February saw low uptake of rooms with 1,906 rooms unclaimed out of 2,530 rooms. *Noted*
- c **Note** that the next lobby release of 4,500 rooms for February, March and April is due to occur on Thursday 24 February. We anticipate low uptake of vouchers from this lobby. *Noted*
- d **Note** that in-light of reduced demand, MIQ intend to revert to the previous self-service model for Managed Isolation Allocation System booking, with no further lobby releases following the release on Thursday, 24 February. *Noted*
- e **Note** that the self-service model could be 'switched on' from 2 March depending on the timing of any announcements. *Noted*
- f **Indicate** whether you wish to announce this change or whether you wish for MIQ to announce this change

I will announce

MIQ can announce
- g **Note** that we will work with your office to communicate this change, in-line with other related announcements. *Noted*

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

Agree / Disagree



Kara Isaac
General Manager, MIQ Policy
Managed Isolation and Quarantine, MBIE

22 / 02 / 2022



Hon Chris Hipkins
Minister for COVID-19 Response

24 / 02 / 2022

Background

1. In the 17 February lobby release, 594 people secured vouchers (624 rooms, out of a total 2,530 rooms available), with 1,906 rooms unclaimed. We expect a number of these vouchers are 'insurance vouchers' that will be wasted as people eligible for self-isolation after Step 2 of RNZ will have booked them just in case.¹
2. On 19 February, we advised you that we expect demand for MIQ from the border to almost totally disappear from 14 March with the introduction of Step 2 of Reconnecting New Zealanders (RNZ) [2122-2742 refers]. A small number of travellers will require MIQ vouchers in future, in order to access the high-risk pathway.
3. In the context of significantly reduced demand for MIQ, this briefing provides advice on a shift to the previous self-service model for those still required to enter MIQ through the high-risk pathway, and the consequential end of the MIQ lobby and scheduled voucher releases.

We intend to shift back to the self-service model in-light of reduced demand for vouchers

4. The lobby system was necessary when demand for MIQ rooms was significantly higher than supply. The lobby system was first trialled in August 2021, with a view to improving the experience of users by increasing the stability of the website, removing the need to continuously check the website for new vouchers, and using a format familiar from other ticket-buying experiences [2122-0631 refers].
5. However, in a low-demand environment, lobby releases are inefficient and can lead to room wastage, due to the time period between lobby releases.
6. Given that demand is expected to continue to be low, we intend to revert to the previous self-service model following the next lobby release on Thursday, 24 February, with announcements to be confirmed in discussion with your office.

Self-service model and improvements since August 2021

7. Self-service means that rooms will be available in MIAS at any time. Travellers will be able to log in at any time, select their travel dates, see if MIQ rooms are available, and secure a voucher for their preferred date.
8. We are confident that the self-service model will not have the same issues that arose before the lobby was introduced due our expectation that demand for MIQ will significantly reduce after Step 2 of RNZ.
9. With low numbers of travellers expected under the high-risk pathway, we anticipate few instances, and reduced implications of, behaviours seen in the past such as the use of bots or fake passport numbers. This is because supply will significantly exceed the demand for rooms available, reducing the incentives for people to behave in ways which breach the terms of service.
10. The traveller authentication requirement in MIAS also means that only those eligible to travel to New Zealand can book a voucher and lowers the risk of people using fake passport numbers to secure vouchers. It also allows booking forms to pre-populate, streamlining the process for booking and reducing any benefit to bot use.

¹ 356 New Zealand Citizens booked travel from Australia (47 people) and from the rest of the world (308 people) for March and April. We expect most of these travellers would be eligible for self-isolation provided they meet vaccination requirements.

Benefits of reverting to self-service

11. Travellers do not have to wait for a lobby to book a voucher, instead they can book at a time convenient to them.
12. Any vouchers not confirmed within 48 hours will immediately be released back into MIAS instead of being held back for the next lobby release. This reduces wastage of rooms which may otherwise have not been claimed due to a short period between the next lobby release and when travel was to occur.
13. As flight itineraries become more stable vouchers can be released much further in advance than three to four months.
14. The need for emergency allocation applications will disappear as voucher availability and accessibility increases. Those with an urgent need to travel will be able to get instant confirmation of a voucher through MIAS without needing to provide evidence of their emergency and wait for a decision.
15. With significant capacity forecast within MIQ facilities from Step 1, there is a risk that MIQ could be criticised for not supporting travellers requiring vouchers to access them in the simplest and efficient way possible. Self-service will achieve the best utilisation of MIQ facilities.

Potential risks of reverting to self-service

16. The traveller authentication requirement does not prevent duplicate bookings by multiple users or booking 'insurance vouchers' by people who are otherwise eligible for the medium risk pathway, whether under the lobby system or the self-service system. There may be instances of hoarding vouchers due to the large number of rooms that are forecast to be available for each day.
17. We will closely monitor user behaviour and will work with our system provider to plan improvements in case any issues are identified so that we can respond quickly, for example where issues may unjustifiably inhibit the rights of New Zealand citizens to enter New Zealand. We will also work to continuously improve the system we have in place.
18. Should steps 1 or 2 of Reconnecting New Zealand be delayed we can quickly reimplement the lobby system to manage any demand increases.

New process for unvaccinated travellers and those with medical exemptions from Australia

19. Currently flights from Australia from 28 February onwards are not loaded into MIAS to prevent people eligible for the medium-risk pathway from 28 February booking 'insurance vouchers'. Air New Zealand and Qantas will carry unvaccinated travellers with medical exemptions, but there is no pathway for these travellers to secure vouchers as there are no Australia flights on MIAS. Instead, we have created a manual process to issue a voucher to these travellers once approved by the airline.
20. These issues are unique to Australian travellers due to the limited airline choices, and we have created a new page on our MIQ website to provide specific advice to these travellers.
21. There is currently no direct pathway for unvaccinated New Zealanders in Australia (without medical exemptions) to book a MIAS voucher as Air New Zealand and Qantas do not carry unvaccinated travellers. Instead, these travellers will need to transit through another airport where airlines who carry these travellers board passengers.

Next steps

22. There has been a significant amount of media attention surrounding MIAS and the lobby system, and you may want to consider announcing these proposed changes.
23. We will work with your office to identify an appropriate time to announce these changes, including consideration of whether they should be announced separately or in-line with other announcements related to MIQ or Reconnecting New Zealanders. We would prefer any announcements to be made the week of 28 February at the latest, otherwise we may need to run another lobby release.
24. Following the lobby release on Thursday 24 February, we will begin shifting the MIAS system back to a self-service model and will not plan for any further lobby releases. We will await announcements to 'switch on' the self-service model which could be as early as 2 March depending on announcement dates.
25. We expect that from Step 2 of RNZ, there will be very little on-going demand for offline allocations, including groups and sector allocations, time-sensitive travel allocations, and emergency allocations. Subject to your meeting with officials on Tuesday 22 March, MIQ is considering the future for offline allocation processes and will provide you with further advice.