



BRIEFING

Additional movement restrictions following the Day 11/12 test

Date:	28 January 2021	Priority:	High
Security classification:	In Confidence	Tracking number:	2021-2131

Action sought		
	Action sought	Deadline
Hon Chris Hipkins Minister for COVID-19 Response	Note additional movement restrictions for returnees following the day 11/12 test	30 January 2021

Contact for telephone discussion (if required)			
Name	Position	Telephone	1st contact
Megan Main	Deputy Chief Executive, MIQ		Privacy of natural persons ✓
Privacy of natural persons	Manager, MIQ Policy		
	Senior Policy Advisor, MIQ Policy		

The following departments/agencies have been consulted
Health, Crown Law

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 Withdrawn |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

To update you on how movement will be restricted for returnees in Managed Isolation and Quarantine Facilities (MIQF)'s following their day 11/12 test until departure.

Executive summary

On 25 January a community case of COVID-19 was confirmed in Northland. It was also confirmed that the source of infection was exposure within the Auckland Pullman Managed Isolation Facility (MIF) that the case had recently been released from.

In the last 24 hours, there have been two more positive cases, which are currently being treated as 'suspected new infections', though they are not confirmed. It is likely that the source of infection for these two cases is exposure in the Pullman Auckland MIF.

Immediate action has been undertaken to reduce the risk of cross-contamination within MIQFs and a number of reviews are underway.

Whilst these reviews are underway and officials review the emerging evidence around how transmission occurred, we consider it would be prudent to take a precautionary approach and restrict returnees to their room following their day 11/12 test.

The Ministry of Health are of the view that there is a sufficient public health rationale to restrict returnees to their rooms between their day 11/12 test to the time of their departure, as an interim measure until a full review of the IPC protocols is undertaken.

Legal professional privilege

MBIE should keep the necessity of the restrictions under review, including as any public health advice changes.

MBIE will implement these additional movement restrictions from midday Saturday 30 January 2021 in Managed Isolation and Quarantine Facilities.

Recommended action

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

- a **Note** that due to the increased transmissibility of the new COVID-19 variants there is an increased danger of returnees being infected within MIQ. This also increases the risk of an individual becoming a recent positive case after their day 11/12 test. Therefore, not being picked up by the testing regime and released into the community, as happened with the recent Northland case.

Noted

- b **Note** that we have put in place immediate actions to strengthen MIQ systems and processes, including increasing the cleaning frequency for high touch areas

Noted

- c Note** that we have a number of reviews underway that we will report back to you on, including:
- a. The way cohorts are allocated into MIQFs [5 February];
 - b. Transport planning [mid-February]; and
 - c. The suitability of current managed isolation facilities [4 March].

Noted

- d Note** that further restrictions on movements are desirable as a precautionary measure to reduce the likelihood of infection prior to release.

Noted

- e Note** that MBIE will implement the following additional temporary movement restrictions at midday Saturday within MIFs, generally, for arrivals following their Day 11/12 test until their departure

- a. Returnees will not be able to leave their room to take exercise or to access fresh air; and
- b. Returnees will not be permitted outside for smoking breaks, unless they have access to an appropriate balcony from their room.

Noted

- f Note** that some existing permissions that returnees have to leave their rooms and / or the MIQFs will continue to apply, including the:

- a. Ability to leave their rooms to preserve or protect their own or another person's life, health or safety in an emergency;
- b. Ability to leave to access medical or support services, where those services can't be provided in an isolation and quarantine facility;
- c. Ability to visit the room of a fellow resident if in the same travel bubble, in accordance with existing operational procedures; and
- d. Conditions imposed in any exemption to the COVID-19 Public Health Response (Isolation and Quarantine) Order 2020 granted by the Minister for COVID-19 Response or the Director-General of Health.

Noted

- g Note** that we will keep the following approach under review whilst officials continue to review the emerging evidence around new strains of the virus and how the transmission occurred in the Pullman Auckland Managed Isolation Facility.

Noted

- h Note** that mental health and support services will be provided to support stricter isolation in rooms and mitigate any significant adverse impacts on the wellbeing of guests.

Noted

- i **Note** that for people who are unable or refuse the test, stricter restrictions on movement will still apply whilst Medical Officer of Health advice is sought. These people may have been subject to stricter restrictions already if they refused earlier testing.

Noted



Megan Main
Deputy Chief Executive, MIQ
MBIE

28 / 01 / 2021

Hon Chris Hipkins
Minister for COVID-19 Response

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Background

1. The increasing number of COVID-19 cases globally (particularly in the US and UK) and the more contagious strains of COVID-19 identified in the United Kingdom, South Africa and Brazil has led to consideration of further precautionary measures to reduce the risk of COVID-19 entering the New Zealand community.
2. On 25 January it was confirmed that there was a community COVID-19 case who had recently been released from an MIF. The case was confirmed as the South African variant, and it was contracted while in a MIF from a returnee on the same floor. Contact tracing and testing of close contacts indicates there has been no transmission to others, however testing is ongoing and close contacts remain in isolation.
3. Testing of the cohort released from the Pullman Auckland MIF has resulted in two more positive tests. Genomic sequencing is underway to establish if these are linked, however at this stage the two new cases are being treated as suspected active infections.
4. On 26 January, we provided you with advice on how MIQ settings and processes could be strengthened to reduce the risk of any cross-transfer of COVID-19 between returnees in managed isolation facilities [briefing 2021-2085 refers].
5. This briefing updates you on new restrictions on the movement of returnees between day 11/12 test and their departure.

Work already underway

6. Immediate actions that we have undertaken to reduce the risk of exposure in the facilities include increasing the cleaning frequency for high touch common areas and requiring mask use during heavy exercise
7. We also have a number of areas under review within MIQ, including -
 - The way cohorts are allocated into MIQFs
 - Transport planning
 - The suitability of current managed isolation facilities
 - Reducing functional capacity in MIQ to allow for 'redundancy' in the system and a better staff to returnee ratio
 - All processes around foot traffic in the facilities
 - Whether all arrivals should stay in their rooms for their first 48 hours (as we do with day 0/1 testing)
 - The MIQ Operational Framework
 - How and when we clean the facilities to reduce the chance of surface transmission.

Implementation of additional movement restrictions

8. Further to the above, MBIE will implement additional movement restrictions on midday Saturday within MIQFs following their Day 11/12 test until their departure.
9. Keeping COVID-19 out and preventing the entry of new cases of COVID-19 into New Zealand remains fundamental to our elimination strategy.

10. To limit the transmission risk within MIQ facilities, stricter restrictions on movement whilst the Day 11/12 test result is returned are now prudent – particularly whilst officials continue to review the emerging evidence around new strains of the COVID-19 and how the transmission occurred in the Pullman Auckland Managed Isolation Facility.
11. In light of the increased transmissibility of the new variants of COVID-19, there is an increased risk generally that transmission will occur within an MIQF facility. End-of-stay transmission presents a particular risk. If a returnee is infected within the facility then incubation periods may mean that the existing testing regime, which is designed to pick up infections at the point of origin or inflight, is less effective. The risk of end-of-stay transmission can be reduced by restricting movement of returnees following the day 11/12 test.
12. Returnees in MIQF facilities are currently permitted to leave their rooms for limited exercise or smoking breaks. We propose to stop both smoking breaks and exercise following the day 11/12 test until they are cleared for departure from the managed isolation facility.

Other general operational requirements to be applied

Specific permissions to leave your room that will continue to apply

13. We note that a number of specific permissions for a person to leave their place of isolation or quarantine are already provided for under the COVID-19 Public Health Response (Isolation and Quarantine Order) 2020. These (unlike the ability to go out to smoke, exercise, and get fresh air) are not at the discretion of the CE of MBIE and will continue to apply. They include the ability to leave your room or place of isolation:
 - a. To preserve or protect their own or another person's life, health or safety in an emergency. For example, if the fire alarm goes off.
 - b. To access medical services, where those services can't be provided in an isolation and quarantine facility. We note that a large number of medical services are provided within MIQFs currently.
 - c. To visit the room of a fellow resident if in the same travel bubble. We note that families are sometimes split across rooms.
 - d. In accordance with the conditions imposed in any exemption to the COVID-19 Public Health Response (Isolation and Quarantine) Order 2020 granted by the Minister for COVID-19 Response or the Director-General of Health.

People who refuse Day 11/12 testing

14. People who refuse testing are at present kept in MIQ for up to 28 days to ensure they do not present a risk to the community. If they refuse day 0/1 testing, then they are confined to their room while advice is sought from the Medical Officer of Health. The matter will then be referred to the CE of MBIE, or designated delegate, for a determination on actions to be taken. The same process will be put in place for those that refuse day 11/12 testing.

Ministry of Health comment

15. The main purpose of day 11/12 testing of returnees is to provide assurance that people are not being discharged whilst potentially infectious i.e. meet the low risk indicators. They could test positive at Day 12 after a negative Day 3 because they were still incubating infection (acquired overseas including during travel) at the time of their day 3 test or because they have been further exposed to infection at some point during their stay in MIQ facilities.

16. There is potential for staff and returnees themselves to relax movement restrictions and IPC measures on receipt of a negative Day 12 test. Whilst a negative day 12 may indicate that the person is not infectious at that time they are still vulnerable to acquiring infection during the remaining days in the MIQ facility. MIQ facilities should however be designed and operated so that protection from infection transmission is provided to all guests and staff.
17. While an investigation within an MIQ facility is underway when there has been established facility transmission requiring people to stay in their rooms or to limit their movements would provide an extra level of protection for those individuals until the specific transmission route has been identified. It should however be seen as an interim measure only. The case for extending to other facilities would be only if there is concern about the integrity of those MIQ facilities. However this too should be as an interim measure.
18. A better long term approach is to address the underlying need to provide a safe environment at all times for returnees and staff.
19. The likely source case for the Pullman MIQ related cases arrived just prior to the introduction of day 0/1 testing and the requirement to remain in their room until those results are available. We don't yet know how the 3 other cases became infected but, had this approach been implemented at the time, it would have further reduced opportunities where cross-infection may have occurred.
20. A range of additional measures could be put in place that may be more effective in addressing the concerns around the safety of the MIQ setting, including a follow-up test 5 days post departure. Ministry of Health will provide further advice on this longer term approach.

Crown Law advice

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Legal professional privilege

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Next steps

26. MBIE will implement room restrictions between day 11/12 test and the time of departure from midday Saturday 30 January 2021.
27. MBIE will keep post day 11/12 test rooms restrictions under review as other changes to MIQF processes are put in place to mitigate the risk of transmission. This will ensure the restrictions remain proportionate to the risk they seek to mitigate. The key factors here are information about the transmission of the new variants, changes to MIQ settings to reduce risk in other ways, and further information about the Pullman Auckland MIF incident and likely modes of transmission.
28. Ministry of Health will provide further advice after its review of IPC protocols.