



AIDE MEMOIRE

Briefing Notes for COVID-19 Minister

Date:	20 November 2020	Priority:	Urgent
Security classification:	Unclassified	Tracking number:	2021-1436

Information for Minister(s)

Hon Chris Hipkins
Minister for COVID-19 Response

Contact for telephone discussion (if required)

Name	Position	Telephone	1st contact
Ingrid Harder	Director ODCE		✓
Privacy of natural persons	Policy Manager, MIQ Policy		

The following departments/agencies have been consulted

Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment

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 Withdrawn |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

Response to Ministers' Office request for briefing notes for Cabinet meeting for Monday 23rd November 2020.

- Plan for Russian fisherman tranche 2
- Emergency allocation process update
- Any other upcoming operational decisions that will need to be publically communicated

Ingrid Harder
Director, ODCE
MIQ, MBIE

20/11/2020

Upcoming Cabinet Papers

- I am planning to bring a suite of papers to Cabinet on 30 November covering a range of Covid response matters.
- Included is the paper to agree the ongoing funding for MIQ which allows us to continue to manage the 32 facilities.
- Cabinet paper on funding for MIQ – there is ongoing media interest on this and Cabinet may want to make announcements (noting there are 5 other associated papers that will likely involve collective announcements coordinated by PSC)

Plans for Russian fishermen tranche 2

Lessons learned and next tranche

- The Ministry of Health and MBIE are mid-way through the lessons learned review into tranche 1.
- This review is considering what improvements may need to be put in place before tranche 2 arrives.
- The decision to approve the two tranches of fishing crew was made at the same time and the arrival date for tranche 2 is yet to be confirmed.
- The indicative dates for their arrival are either 21 or 27 December. MIQ will be confirming these dates with the fishing companies this week.
- I am advised that any recommendations from the lessons learned review will be implemented before the next tranche arrives, and work is already underway in the areas where improvement could be made, including single room allocation, better coordination with the key agencies, and clearer communication to the fishers through the companies.

Fees for Russian Fishers

- The first tranche of deep sea fishing crew were charged the prescribed fee under the Regulations (\$3,100 for the first person in a room and \$950 for the second person in the room).
- They were not charged additional costs for wraparound services such as translation or having a dedicated facility in Christchurch.
- On 16 November 2020, in making decisions on RSE worker class exceptions, Cabinet agreed to charge critical workers a higher fee (around \$4,722).
- Implementing the change to the fees for critical workers Cabinet agreed on Monday 16 November will require a change to the regulations (pre or post-Christmas) and will need to be formally notified;
- This can be implemented through contracts with employers or industry bodies for large groups of critical workers, as long as the higher cost relates to additional wraparound services.

- I am advised that government cannot charge a higher fee through a contract for the same services than would be charged under the Regulations. There has to be something additional provided that warrants the higher fee.
- I am considering amending the MIQ Charges Regulations to give effect to Cabinet's decision for all critical workers (not just large groups).
- MBIE has advised that the second tranche of deep sea fishing crew should be charged on the same basis as the first – the \$3,100 set in the current Regulations.
- As the decision to approve the two tranches of fishing crew were made at the same time, it was before any decisions were made to charge critical workers a higher fee. For parity and fairness, we should continue to charge the second tranche on the same basis. This approach should also apply to the other class exceptions approved before 16 November (vets and agricultural contractors).

Emergency allocation process update

Background

Online and offline allocations

- Since 3 November, people entering New Zealand by air have been legally required to obtain a pre-booked voucher for a place in managed isolation and quarantine (MIQ) facility before boarding their flight.
- Vouchers are booked online via the Managed Isolation Allocation System, or MIAS, and are allocated on a first-come, first-served basis.
- In periods of high demand, there may be a delay in obtaining a voucher for people wanting to return to New Zealand.
- To allow for time-critical travel in these periods of high demand, there is an 'offline' allocation process in place to allocate vouchers to people who need to travel urgently to New Zealand for exceptional reasons, when no vouchers are available online.

Pressures on MIQ during late October and early November

- Immediately before MIAS became mandatory on 3 November, and in the transition from airline passenger quotas, there was a spike in demand and a change in returnee behaviour that put pressure on MIQ capacity.
- To alleviate this pressure, MBIE put in place a number of measures, including narrowing the criteria for assessing applications for offline 'emergency allocations'.
- These narrower criteria meant MBIE was only approving emergency allocations for New Zealand citizens or residents with an imminent threat to their life or serious risk to their health, which could only be resolved by urgent travel to New Zealand.
- Since taking these measures, the pressures on MIQ capacity has eased, and MBIE is now in a position to expand the criteria for emergency allocations to include other time-critical and

urgent circumstances.

Revised emergency allocation criteria

- There are currently 150 places available in MIQ per fortnight for emergency allocations.
- I have agreed to adjust the range of circumstances currently being considered for emergency allocations to include the following circumstances:
 - New Zealand citizens or residents where a serious risk to health exists for the applicant or their dependant, which requires urgent travel to New Zealand.
 - Where urgent travel is required to ensure a child is provided with appropriate care and protection.
 - New Zealand citizens or residents who are required to provide critical care for a dependant person in New Zealand and need to travel urgently to do so.
 - New Zealand citizens or residents, or critical workers (visa class), whose entry to New Zealand is time-critical for the purpose of delivering a critical health or public service, including the maintenance of essential infrastructure.
 - New Zealand citizens or residents, who are unable to legally remain in their current location and have no other option but to return to New Zealand.
 - New Zealand and non-New Zealand citizens, where urgent travel to New Zealand is required for national security, national interest or law enforcement reasons.
 - New Zealand citizens or residents entering New Zealand to visit a close relative who is dying or seriously ill, where timely travel is unlikely to be possible if the person books through MIAS.
- Regardless of the reason, to be eligible for an emergency allocation, the travel must be time-critical and the applicant legally entitled to enter New Zealand.
- There is no guarantee that a person who fits within these categories will receive an offline allocation, as this will depend on the numbers of applicants and available places.
- MBIE will continue to review the criteria and number of places set aside for emergency allocations, and will provide me further advice on this in the New Year.

The difference between emergency allocations and exemptions

- Emergency allocations relate only to reasons why people need to travel urgently to New Zealand, whereas exemptions relate to reasons why people need permission to deviate from standard MIQ arrangements once they are in the country.
- Emergency allocations do not have to meet the strict public health and other criteria applied to exemption applications, because people will still need to complete their 14 days Managed Isolation.

- Exemption applications mainly relate to people seeking to leave managed isolation for a specific reason before completing their 14 day stay (e.g. to receive medical treatment).
- While the criteria used to assess emergency allocations and exemptions may sometimes align, this is not always the case.
 - For example, people whose overseas visas expire and are at risk of arrest or other legal action may be granted an emergency allocation to travel to New Zealand, but once they arrive in New Zealand the risk is no longer relevant and they can complete their full stay in MIQ.

Any other upcoming operational decisions that will need to be publically communicated

Nil- changes to fees talking points are included in section 2.