



AIDE MEMOIRE

Post-hearing MIQ questions from the Health Committee

Date:	2 September 2021	Priority:	Medium
Security classification:	In Confidence	Tracking number:	2122-0869

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 Office of DCE, MIQ		✓

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 Withdrawn |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 additional questions that relate to MIQ (Q1, 3 & 4) from the Health Committee, to the Minister for COVID-19 Response.

Ingrid Harder
Director Office of Deputy Secretary
MIQ, MBIE

02.09.2021

Post-hearing MIQ questions from the Health Committee

Q1. When were the health recommendations or guidance for exercise facilities last updated?

National Standards

National standards exist for facilitating and conducting access to fresh air (previously referred to as exercise) for returnees. The national standards are reviewed and updated on a regular basis.

Section 2.1.5 of the Operations Framework outlines the requirements and guidance for setting up and managing a physical MIQF exercise site, including ensuring returnees maintain a 2 metre distance with other returnees, not interacting with other bubbles, and establishing a one way flow system.

The overarching recommendations under Section 2.1.5 were updated in mid-2020, however, since then a number of specific *Updates* regarding returnee access to fresh air/exercise have been made as we learn more about COVID-19. The most recent of these Updates was 09 August, 2021.

As part of the exercise areas in MIQFs, fencing has been erected where applicable dependent on each MIQF's requirements. The MIQF perimeter Fencing Guideline was developed in October 2020 in accordance with MBIE's Workplace Standard and Guideline for Physical Security (Physical Security Controls). This is current, and has not been updated since first promulgated.

Crowne Plaza's exercise area

The Crowne Plaza outdoor exercise areas have been in place for more than 12 months. Various IPC audits have considered the exercise spaces at this facility. A compliance audit was carried out in the Crowne Plaza on 15 June, 2021 and this audit noted that the Crowne Plaza has limited space for exercise, but identified no issues with the exercise area set-up and their Infection and Prevention Control measures.

In addition, since the possible links to the community outbreak were identified a further IPC audit was undertaken on 1 September and this was then considered by the Technical Advisory Group on 2 September. The TAG's review considered the walkway by the returnee fresh air area, which the public uses to access the Huawei Centre. It found that the risk of exposure to members of the public walking past returnees as they arrived at the facility or while they were getting fresh air was "very low", and that there was limited public health or IPC rationale in closing this area. Although the risk has been deemed very low, out of an abundance of caution, MIQ has taken the step of raising the wall of the walkway and placing a roof on top. The structure will have shrink wrap covering both the roof and the wall.

Current exercise protocols

MBIE and the MOH work hard to facilitate returnees' access to fresh air, while minimising the risk of Covid-19 transmission; our processes and procedures are frequently adjusted in line with the latest advice infection and prevention control measures. There are a number of mitigations currently in place to reduce risk of transmission in shared spaces while returnees move to/from exercise areas:

- PPE use – medical masks for returnees, P2/N95s for staff in indoor returnee-facing zones.
- Air filtration units in corridors, lifts.
- Limiting the frequency of returnee movement, and limiting the number of returnees moving at any given time i.e. through booking/scheduling systems for exercising/smoking.
- Only allowing returnees to leave their room after their negative day 0/1 test result.

- Isolating returnees and their bubble to their room if they develop symptoms while awaiting test results.

As we learn more about how the virus works, especially the current Delta variant, we will continue to adapt returnees' access to fresh air processes to ensure risks are minimised.

Q3. Please provide a breakdown of Māori and Pacific Island staff working in MIQ facilities.

The following ethnicity data for people working in MIQ facilities has been created by the Ministry of Health by cross matching information held within the Border Worker Testing Register (BWTR) with the National Health Index (NHI) number.

Ethnicity	Number of people
European	2401
Asian	1640
Pacific Island	776
Maori	732
Middle Eastern, Latin, American and African	103
Unspecified	86
Other	27

Q4. How many MIQ rooms do not have air ventilation systems?

The risk presented by ventilation systems in managed isolation facilities has been assessed by health experts as low, however this is another layer of protection we are adding to the range of defences New Zealand utilises at our border and inside MIQ. These layers of defence work together to create barriers and safeguards that protect returnees, border workers and the wider community.

Around the spread of airborne transmission of COVID-19 within MIQ facilities an important defensive layer is ensuring a negative air pressure in each room. Once a room is at negative pressure there is no air movement from the room to the corridor when the door to the room is opened, and there is a continual turnover of air within the room as more air is extracted than is being introduced. Our ventilation and remediation programme with the goal of achieving negative pressure in returnees' rooms has been underway for some months.

It should be noted that it has never been intended that every room would have an individual air filtration unit installed. Rather, air filtration unit installation has been prioritised to highest risk areas within each Managed Isolation and Quarantine Facility (MIQFs) where airborne pathogens are most likely to be transmitted. This has included common spaces including lifts and corridors, swabbing rooms where the size of the room posed a risk, and some dedicated *Quarantine* rooms.

MoH commenced the deployment of air filtration units to these common spaces in April and to date 1148 units (77%) have been installed. A further 350 units (23%) are in the process of being installed to complete the installation to the common spaces across all 31 facilities. All available units in the country have been secured by the Ministry of Health and these are being distributed according to national priorities. In conjunction with the increased demand for quarantine rooms, as a result of the current community outbreak, additional air filtration units have been sourced and they will be

installed in new *Quarantine* rooms, in advance of them being occupied. MIQ's focus is on deploying the air filtration units into rooms within *Quarantine* facilities, and completing the common spaces deployment for all 31 facilities.