



BRIEFING

Review of MIQ Wellington Based FTEs

Date:	18 December 2020	Priority:	High
Security classification:		Tracking number:	2021-1844

Action sought		
	Action sought	Deadline
Hon Chris Hipkins Minister for COVID-19 Response	Note that officials propose two options to address concerns over MIQ Wellington FTE levels and funding	13 January 2021
Hon Grant Robertson Minister of Finance	<p>Agree to either:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Option 1 – Status quo (preferred) Option 2 - Immediate reduction of 38 FTEs (\$4.1m per annum) in Wellington Office <p>Agree that in lieu of proceeding with either option, Ministers may wish to direct officials to do a more fulsome review of possible cost savings, and impacts on outputs and staff wellbeing, with a report back in March</p>	13 January 2021

Contact for telephone discussion (if required)				
Name	Position	Telephone		1st contact
Megan Main	DCE Managed Isolation and Quarantine	Privacy of natural persons		✓
Privacy of natural persons	Policy Director, Managed Isolation and Quarantine Unit, MBIE	Privacy of natural persons		

The following departments/agencies have been consulted
The Treasury were consulted but have not seen the final paper.

Minister's office to complete:

Approved

Declined

Noted

Needs change

Seen

Overtaken by Events

See Minister's Notes

Withdrawn

Comments



BRIEFING

Review of MIQ Wellington Based FTEs

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Purpose

To provide you with further information on MIQ staff levels in Wellington including the key functions and the implications of any reductions.

We understand that there is concern that MIQ may be asking for more resource than actually required to effectively run the MIQ function, and, in particular, that it may not be feasible to recruit the proposed number of FTEs in Wellington-based positions.

The purpose of this briefing is to respond to those concerns, identify potential cost savings and the likely impact on the sustainability of the MIQ system of those savings.

Executive summary

On Tuesday 2 December 2020 the Minister for COVID-19 Response took the *Managed Isolation and Quarantine (MIQ) Operating Model and Funding* paper to Cabinet Business Committee (CBC). CBC requested that the funding for MIQ Policy full time equivalents (FTEs) be reduced by 20 percent.

We made the required changes and updated the paper for Cabinet consideration on Monday 7 December 2020. To support your discussions, we provided talking points to the Minister for COVID-19 Response which included the option for additional modest reductions in FTEs, and the consequences of making those reductions.

On Monday 7 December, Cabinet (Cab-20-MIN-0511 refers) decisions included authorising the Prime Minister, the Minister of Finance and the Minister for COVID-19 Response to have Power to Act to take further decisions on adjusting the funding levels for MBIE following further advice on reducing its costs [CAB-20-MIN-0511, rec 16].

On 10 December 2020 the Office of the Minister for COVID-19 Response requested a briefing to joint Ministers (COVID-19 Response and Finance) in response to this Cabinet decision. We have been asked to provide the following information for all functions and services provided from Wellington:

- an outline of the current and planned staff to deliver head office functions, that also maps out the different teams and what functions they perform
- options for other reductions (e.g. a 20% reduction across the board, not just the policy reductions already made)
- other options for how some services could be delivered differently
- inclusion of the option to keep the settings as already agreed by Cabinet.

The requested information is contained in this briefing.

We propose two options for how to address your concerns over MIQ Wellington FTE levels and funding. These are:

Option One – Status quo (preferred)

MBIE's preferred option is for no further reduction in funding and/or FTE numbers beyond what was already agreed as part of the Cabinet process. We consider the level of resourcing agreed by Cabinet is the level required to build a sustainable MIQ model, which can flex to meet Ministerial and public expectations for minimising the risk of COVID-19 to New Zealand while facilitating the flow of New Zealanders and other high priority groups across the border. Whilst MIQ looks like it is operating well this is due to prioritising resources to support the frontline and ministers and the discretionary effort from staff to keep the system functions (many working long hours with little ability to take leave for example).

We need a level of certainty of funding to be able to secure people on a medium term basis. Reduced churn of people, less time recruiting, greater retention of knowledge, are likely to create efficiencies in MIQ. At this point, insufficient resourcing makes it difficult to plan what we need to do in some areas.

Over the next 6-12 months, there may be opportunities to improve systems and processes and take out cost. Given the considerable flux and constant change in the system, it is difficult to immediately pinpoint where these opportunities may present. However, we will report regularly to the Minister of Finance and the Minister for COVID-19 Recovery when these are identified. Any funding remaining after the wind-down of MIQ will be returned to the Crown [CAB-20-MIN-0511].

Option Two – Immediate reduction of 38 FTEs (\$4.1m per annum) in Wellington Office

Should Ministers wish to further reduce resourcing for MIQ with immediate effect, we have identified 38 roles in two Wellington-based teams, where we consider the impact of staff reductions is manageable without seriously undermining the sustainability and public expectations of the MIQ systems. These roles are located within the Intelligence, Data and Insights team (provides data analysis and dashboard reporting) and the Service Quality and Assurance branch. The impacts of reducing FTE count in these areas would be:

- reduced ability to produce dashboards for Ministerial decision making and provide proactive analytics and data insights and some fore
- reduced capacity in the compliance, risk and debt-recovery space.

We advise against a blanket 20% reduction in Wellington-based functions as suggested in the initial tasking as:

- FTE reductions in some areas which immediately deliver or support frontline services could undermine public confidence in the MIQ system, and potentially impact the wellbeing of those in frontline roles.
- It creates operational risks and reduces our ability to collect fees, process exemptions and increases the risk of not being able to meet the intent of the Border Orders.
- our current assessment is the FTE count requested is only sufficient to deliver a baseline of service against the current policy settings. Any incremental changes have broader flow on effects. For example, the establishment of Safe Travel Zones will raise new policy questions around further opening of the border, how to accommodate a greater number of new groups within MIQ and the appropriate fees to charge.

Ministers may wish to direct officials to do a more fulsome review of possible cost savings, and impacts on outputs and staff wellbeing, with a report back in March. Such an approach would also provide time for a more considered assessment of alternative models of delivery (as outlined in paras 66 to 67) and their likely impact on costs and/or regional labour market constraints. To carry

out this review effectively, some resourcing would need to be diverted from other priority projects scheduled for MIQ.

As we stabilise, and can do that work, we are open to reducing our overall FTE ask and finding savings if they can be made in a way that limits the impact on our frontline.

Recommended action

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

- a **Note** that on Tuesday 2 December 2020, the Minister for COVID-19 Response took the *Managed Isolation and Quarantine (MIQ) Operating Model and Funding* paper to Cabinet Business Committee (CBC) which requested that the funding for MIQ Policy full time equivalents (FTEs) be reduced by 20 percent
- Noted*
- b **Note** that on Monday 7 December, Cabinet authorised the Prime Minister, the Minister of Finance and the Minister for COVID-19 Response to have Power to Act to take further decisions on adjusting the funding levels for MBIE MIQ following further advice on reducing its costs [CAB-20-MIN-0511, rec 16]
- Noted*
- c **Note** that this briefing provides advice to Cabinet's decision above
- Noted*
- d **Note** that officials propose two options to address concerns over MIQ Wellington FTE levels and funding
- Noted*
- e **Note** that officials advise against a blanket 20% reduction in Wellington-based functions as it could undermine public confidence in the MIQ system, and potentially impact the wellbeing of those in frontline roles
- Noted*
- f **Agree** to either:
- Option 1 – Status quo (preferred)**
- Agree / Disagree*
- Option 2 – Immediate reduction of 38 FTEs (\$4.1m per annum) in Wellington Office**
- Agree / Disagree*
- g **Agree** that in lieu of proceeding with either option, Ministers may wish to direct officials to do a more fulsome review of possible cost savings, and impacts on outputs and staff wellbeing, with a report back in March
- Agree / Disagree*



Megan Main
DCE, Managed Isolation and Quarantine
MBIE

18, 12, 2020
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Hon Chris Hipkins
Minister for COVID-19 Response

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Hon Grant Robertson
Minister of Finance

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Background

1. MIQ was established under urgency as part of the all-of-government response to COVID-19. The responsibility for managing international arrivals through MIQ was initially shared across a number of agencies operating under the leadership of the Operations Command Centre. In June 2020, Cabinet agreed that MBIE would be responsible for the overall MIQ operating model, including a corresponding transfer of the remaining appropriated MIQ funding [CAB-20-MIN-0284].
2. Since June, MBIE has funded the operation of the MIQ system from the transferred funding. MBIE was instructed to report back on the ongoing sustainable level of funding required for the MIQ system [CAB-20-MIN-0284].
3. Because of the temporary nature of the funding, uncertainty over what job security could be provided to anyone hired into MIQ, and the Cabinet report back, MBIE has, to date, focused on running the MIQ system through a mix of very short fixed term roles and secondments from MBIE and other agencies. In addition, because appropriation rules require that the costs of MIQ be charged to the MIQ appropriation, and it was unclear when a further funding decision would be made, a conservative approach was taken to which roles were filled. As a result, we have focused on resourcing those roles that are frontline (e.g. facility staff), customer facing (staff dealing with exemptions), and those that are ministerial facing.
4. In October we advised the then Minister responsible for MIQ and the Minister of Finance that existing funding was expected to run out in December 2020 (Briefing 2021-0942 refers). The October briefing highlighted the timeframe on which certainty of funding for MIQ needed to be obtained in order to avoid a breach of appropriation and to allow us to negotiate the contracts with the suppliers which expire at the end of December. The delay in funding has meant that we have agreed very short extensions and will need to re-negotiate to secure better term and rates. The delay has resulted in an increased volume of work for the procurement team and will likely impact on our negotiating position.
5. On Tuesday 2 December 2020 the Minister for COVID-19 Response took the *Managed Isolation and Quarantine (MIQ) Operating Model and Funding* paper to Cabinet Business Committee (CBC). CBC requested that the funding for MIQ policy full time equivalents (FTEs) be reduced by 20 percent. We understand that there was also a wider discussion on other MIQ FTEs but no other changes were explicitly requested.
6. We made the required changes and provided the Minister for COVID-19 Response with an updated paper to take to Cabinet on Monday 7 December 2020. To support Cabinet's discussions, we provided talking points to the Minister for COVID-19 Response which included the option for additional modest reductions in FTEs, and the consequences of making those reductions.
7. On Monday 7 December, Cabinet (Cab-20-MIN-0511 refers) decisions included:
 - agreeing to fund the MIQ system to June 2022, including \$1,481m for costs MBIE is responsible for managing (incorporates contracts with hotel providers), \$191.1m for the estimated cost of health care services to support MIQ (into the Health appropriation), and \$24.6m for transport sector costs (into the Transport appropriation);
 - authorising the Prime Minister, the Minister of Finance and the Minister for COVID-19 Response to have Power to Act to take further decisions on adjusting the funding levels for MBIE following further advice on reducing its costs [CAB-20-MIN-0511, rec 16]; and
 - directing MBIE to report to the Minister for COVID-19 Response and the Minister of Finance on progress on MIQ accommodation cost savings by early 2021 [rec 15].

8. While Cabinet has agreed to fund the functions that MBIE manages within the MIQ system, the actual level of funding is unclear given the authority for joint Ministers to take further decisions on adjusting the funding for MBIE (as per rec 16).
9. On 10 December 2020 the Office of the Minister for COVID-19 Response requested a briefing to joint Ministers (COVID-19 Response and Finance) in response to the Cabinet decision to authorise the Prime Minister, the Minister of Finance and the Minister for COVID-19 Response to adjust funding levels for MBIE. We were asked to provide the following information for all functions and services provided from Wellington:
 - an outline of the current and planned staff to deliver head office functions, that also maps out the different teams and what functions they perform
 - options for other reductions (e.g. a 20% reduction across the board, not just the policy reductions already made)
 - other options for how some services could be delivered differently
 - inclusion of the option to keep the settings as already agreed by Cabinet.

Development of MIQ funding request

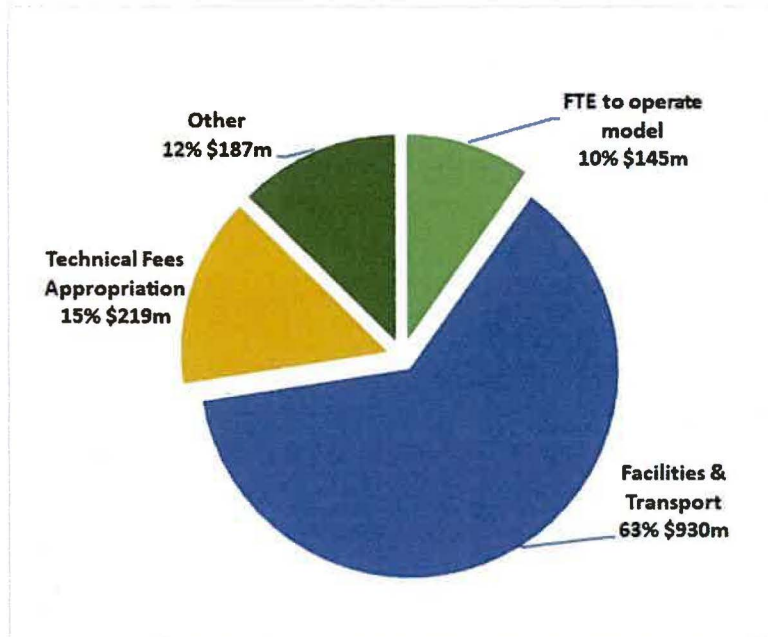
10. A significant work programme was implemented from June 2020 to consolidate the MIQ system and effectively manage public health risks, including:
 - strengthening the service delivery arrangements, including implementing customer focus capability to deal with questions, complaints, emergency allocations and exceptions
 - increasing capacity from approximately 3,500 rooms in early June to 6,200 (including emergency contingency) by late July
 - developing demand management mechanisms, including the online Managed Isolation and Allocation system (MIAS)
 - introducing standard operating procedures across facilities to provide guidance for Defence Force, Police and hotel staff on the minimum standards in relation to infection prevention, security and pastoral care of guests.
11. Throughout the establishment phase it has become clear that our engagement with returnees begins well in advance of a person arriving at the border. Significant engagement happens across the MIQ system and this is highlighted in the customer journey in **Annex 2**.
12. The key challenge when resourcing and operating MIQ is that by its nature it operates 24/7. Facilities run 24/7 and a number of the functions provided on a national basis from head office in Wellington have to also be resourced either 24/7 or for extended operating hours, in order to respond to issues that arise within the facilities, or to people who need advice and support and are currently based overseas. Shift work is labour intensive, and supporting this functionality means that in some areas 2-3 FTEs may be needed for what may look like a single role.
13. For roles that are not 24/7, many staff are still on-call and an element of 'catch-up' is needed at the start of normal working hours to ensure they are across anything that might have occurred while they were not working. FTE density therefore is far higher than traditional Wellington roles.

14. Throughout the last five months, MBIE MIQ has taken responsibility for the overall operation of the MIQ system. At the same time as providing isolation and quarantine services, we have sought to make urgent improvements to the riskier aspects of the system. MIQ is deeply personal to returnees' lives and we have moved to respond to needs as fast as possible and provide compassionate engagement. We have also responded to changes in policy settings (e.g. introduction of staff testing, charging fees to some travellers) and started to plan for what a sustainable MIQ system would look like.
15. We see a sustainable MIQ model as being one where:
 - risks of COVID-19 passing through the border are minimised to the greatest extent possible, and we are able to assess and apply learnings across all aspects of our work (but particularly those related to infection control)
 - we can maximise the utilisation of space in the MIQ system, and (over time) improve the way that we allocate space to better align with government objectives
 - we can operate all functions that are associated with the delivery of MIQ to a quality, and at a pace, that meets the expectations of Ministers and particularly guests, the latter of whom often have time critical requests for consideration of matters such as exemptions, fee waivers and emergency allocations
 - we are able to operate in a transparent and coordinated manner that builds trust and confidence with both the New Zealand public and with Ministers, and are responsive to Ministers' requests
 - we can meet our obligations as an employer, and as the lead party responsible for Health and Safety at all of our sites and offices
 - we maintain public confidence in the role and importance of the MIQ system in the government's agile elimination strategy.
16. The proposed sustainable model was based on a combination of both bottom up and top down analysis. People brought in to MIQ to help run newly established functions (such as Regional Isolation and Quarantine Coordination Centres (RIQCCs), complaints functions, and write standard operating procedures) were asked to input regarding the design and functions required in their areas, and the level of FTE required to provide sustainable resourcing and allow for reasonable ongoing workloads.
17. In parallel, KPMG provided top down design on the operating model and structure, and supported review across the model to identify any areas of duplication. KPMG's model sought to create a framework that would be sustainable in the medium term, and resilient in order to support the changing operating environment.
18. KPMG also considered, but ruled out, other options for MIQ design, including a decentralised model. This option was discarded as it was overly complicated and would reduce our ability to leverage off the support from MBIE and other government agencies to deliver some of the core central services needed as part of the MIQ system.
19. This combination of top down and bottom up approach has meant that the system design has been able to happen alongside the development of the business. The benefit of 'flying while designing' is that we can see the needs and gaps in the current operation, and this is reflected in the FTE funding being requested. The challenge of the approach, however, has been a perception that we are already doing all that is needed.
20. In reality resources have been targeted at supporting the frontline (public facing) functions, and in supporting the Government facing functions, at the expense of allocating FTEs to

important work such as resourcing the allocation and fees processes, or activities to consistently improve the quality of our operations.

Request for funding

21. Currently the FTEs in roles significantly under represent the FTEs needed for a sustainable model. The comparison and rationale is provided in **Annex Two**.
22. The diagram below shows how that funding is divided at a high level:



23. A significant proportion of the funding sought is for the provision of facilities and transport and the associated services that are needed to run an MIQ facility.
24. Included in the cost is the provision for a technical appropriation. MIQ fees defer the payment of invoices for 90 days, and therefore under the Public Finance Act 1989, the receivable for the fee scheme is recorded in MBIE's (the Crown's) accounts as a loan asset. Accounting rules require that the loan asset is measured at fair value. Any write-down does not affect the cash position, but does require an appropriation.
25. The category 'other' covers the cost of implementing system improvements (MIAS, Bluetooth technology trials, improved client management systems etc.).

FTE Requirements

MBIE FTEs

26. Funding for MBIE FTEs makes up 21% of all FTEs working across MIQ. This can be broken into three areas:
 - Frontline staff - employed and working directly in or with the facilities and people planning to travel through the border.
 - National operations with frontline contact – roles that are based in Wellington and either have direct or indirect connections to the frontline. Further information is provided in **Annex Two**.

- HQ functions – roles that are needed to support the MIQ system, policy, people and processes.
27. Many of the FTEs that deliver MIQ operations are funded by home agencies (NZDF for example) along with a large hotel staff base funded through the contracts we have with the facilities. There are circa 4,100 FTE in total working across the MIQ system.
 28. Of the proposed MBIE FTEs, 667 are for frontline staff or national operations with frontline contact (the first 2 points in para 27 above). Examples of national operations with front line contacts are our fees, waivers, exemptions and emergency allocations teams.
 29. **Annex Two** outlines the types of functions MIQ undertakes and why it needs to be resourced to work more than a standard working week to support 24/7 MIF and RIQCC.
 30. We would advise against any reduction in the frontline facing / supporting roles as this would have a significant impact on delivery of core MIQ services.
 31. Only 190 FTE will operate in roles that do not directly work on or with the frontline services
 32. The level of MBIE HQ functions is within the level expected to deliver the range of services that are needed to operate MIQ in an evolving and high risk environment.

Rationale for increasing FTEs from current level

33. The paper presented to CBC and Cabinet included information on the current number of FTEs working in each part of MBIE MIQ, and the proposed number. This appears to have created questions along the lines of *“If MIQ is operating effectively at present, why are the proposed increases in FTEs required?”*
34. In particular, we are aware that the proposed increase in some HQ functions looks especially large relative to the increase in front line services. In part, this reflects that within the limited funding we have had to date, we have generally prioritised the stand up of frontline, customer facing, and Ministerial facing services.
35. The purpose of the operating model and funding request was not to increase the size of existing functions, but to put in place an operating model that would deliver a baseline level of resourcing, moving MIQ from establishment resourcing, to sustainable implementation. The requests for funding for more FTEs reflect that MIQ is not yet fully operational, nor operating in a way that meets the concept of a sustainable model, particularly with regard to many of our national or HQ based functions. As noted above, staffing levels have been constrained to date to ensure MBIE stayed within appropriation until the funding report back could be completed. As a result, some areas of work are under resourced and others are yet to be fully stood up.
36. Some examples of areas of work that are constrained at present, and provided through our Wellington office, include the following:
 - Our ability to undertake activities to assure ourselves that ***standard operating procedures*** (including those related to objectives such as infection prevention control, information privacy, security, and care of unaccompanied minors) are being consistently and appropriately implemented at all MIFs, and that those standard operating procedures are adequate for the range of circumstances arising at the frontline.
 - Our ability to ***design and implement changes*** in response to reviews carried out into how MIQ can improve its operations and better manage risks. We are particularly concerned about situations where we cannot respond in a timely way to recommendations for improvement in relation to infection control or needed

improvements to how we ensure the health and safety of people working in the MIQ system.

- **Operational planning and room allocation functions.** Better resourcing of these functions could potentially improve the utilisation of space in MIQ through better forward planning of room turnover, better prediction of 'no shows', and more sophisticated and evidence based contingency planning (potentially allowing a reduction in the number of rooms held vacant in the case of emergencies). As we get better information on people coming into New Zealand (through MIAS) we would also like to have more capacity to match people to the facilities best able to support their needs. This will improve the guest experience and (we expect) voluntary compliance with MIQ procedures.
- **Operational procurement, and supplier contract management teams/roles.** These teams are responsible for contracting for and managing expenditure equivalent to around 63% of the funding MBIE sought. Better resourcing and support to these teams would potentially allow them to achieve cost savings or additional benefits for the MIQ system. Most hotel contracts will be renegotiated in April, so ensuring sufficient capability in these teams will be a priority.
- **Cooperative work with iwi and other community stakeholders.** MIQ needs to ensure we are taking a partnership approach to how we are working with the iwi in whose rohe MIFs are based. At this time we have very limited capacity to engage with iwi, or respond to the ideas that they bring forward for improving the way we operate.
- **Capturing and analysing data to create evidence bases and improve operational efficiencies.** Better capture of data on how MIQ is operating (e.g. room turn over time frames) and the behaviour of voucher holders (e.g. proportion who cancel bookings, proportion who provide incorrect contact information to avoid fees) would potentially help us design better policies and procedures and either reduce costs or improve value for money.
- **Induction, training and wellbeing** services for the 4,100 people working in MIFs and RIQCCs. The contracting of MIQ services to hotels, supported by rotating defence force staff, means there is a high level of turnover amongst those now providing a frontline government function. Every employee coming in to work in a MIF should be properly trained for the environment, including in basic infection prevention and control requirements, how to safe guard the information and privacy of guests, requirements on them to participate in staff testing, and the suite of MIQ operating procedures and requirements. While MIQ is in the process of rolling out an online training solution, we are not able to progress at the pace or scale we would ideally do so.

37. Looking to the future, while we hope that the context in which MIQ is operating might stabilise, and thus reduce the need for those functions associated with supporting and implementing change, this appears unlikely. There are a range of potential developments and policy changes on the horizon that will impact on what MIQ needs to deliver, including:

- a more risk based approach to MIQ, possibly in response to the vaccination of some overseas populations. A move to a mix of stay lengths in MIQ will require considerable redesign of policy settings and operating model
- the implications of quarantine free travel zones for the need and role of MIQ, in particular when quarantine free zones are being opened up, and if they need to close
- changes to how we charge and collect fees, particularly in response to increasing public awareness of the cost of MIQ, and a greater proportion of people coming through MIQ being liable for fees

- changes to the governance of COVID-19 response and border management arrangements, for example with the introduction of the Executive Board
- potential expectations that MIQ will utilise more technology solutions to support improved compliance with MIQ procedures, including contact tracing to support infection control, and technology to allow more exemption requests to be granted
- resurgence and emergency planning, and ongoing consideration of the extent to which community cases and close contacts will be placed into MIFs, and how MIQ will plan for or create the capacity to meet demand for places from community cases.

Why do some the FTE levels in teams look high?

38. One of the reasons for the perceived high level of cost is that MIQ is a 24/7 operation and this impacts on the operations at a national level. Some teams in the structure need to offer services 24/7 or have staff dedicated to be on call to manage any emergency events. Some examples are provided below.

Engagement and Communications

39. The nature of MIQ operations and the level of risk associated with it means that a standard 9 to 5 communication team would not be able to cope with the demands from the media as well as delivering the core communications and engagement services to five RIQCCs and 32 MIQ facilities that would be expected from a government operations team.
40. Within the 29 roles proposed at the baseline level, at least 14 are based outside of Wellington and delivering communication and engagement with stakeholders at the local and regional level.
41. To manage the demand from external sources it is necessary to have communications support available from 6am to 10pm to respond to emergency events, breaking news for RIQCCs, MIFs, media and key stakeholders.
42. Reducing the level of engagement and communications staff would mean that support for regional proactive communications would be limited (and this in turn has impacts on the operations), including limiting any development of group and returnee information material and promotional campaigns. Out of hours responding to the media will also be impacted.

Group Arrivals

43. The baseline model provides for an increase from 7 to 15 FTEs. This reflects the need to provide additional support to bespoke and large groups entering MIQ. Support is needed from (and in some cases in advance of) the group being granted approval to enter New Zealand as either critical workers or a group supporting a sports or cultural event, through to when they leave MIQ.
44. Our experience to date has shown that the needs of the groups being supported with a range of bespoke arrangements range from translation services, tailored training or rehearsal services, food and logistics. Each group is resource intensive but without the group arrivals support would create more tension on the BAU allocation system.
45. Supporting the expected range of groups entering New Zealand whilst we continue to have a restricted border will require additional FTE support.

MIQ operations

46. The baseline need for this area sees a sharp uplift from 286 FTEs to 422 FTEs reflecting the shift from private security staff to security staff directly employed by MIQ. It is expected that

there would be some minimal cost increase for these staff reflecting the directions from the Prime Minister on salary expectations. Moving to directly employed staff would also see a reduction in the contracted expenditure.

Allocation and Fees

47. The baseline need for the allocation and fees areas sees an uplift from 38 FTEs to 58 FTEs. This reflects the increasing demand for these services since the fees regulations were introduced, and the work needed on offline allocations for MIQ vouchers.
48. This part of MIQ has been under pressure to manage the sheer volume of work and in order to manage this and to get ahead of the demand for invoices and enquiries regarding fees, alongside the current demand surge for off-line allocation we have identified the need to stand up an additional team to manage this work.
49. Any changes to the way MIQ operates in the future will likely place more demand on this function with more arrivals being liable for fees (increased use by non-New Zealanders).
50. A more detailed description of these functions is provided in **Annex Three: National Service Operations**

Risks with current resourcing levels

51. The main way to manage risks is to sufficiently resource MIQ to a baseline level that will put things on a stable footing and allow us to build capacity to do the things that aren't happening at all.
52. Initially when MIQ was stood up, the time period to when further funding decisions would be made was expected to be quite short, occurring by early September, in line with confirming funding before the General Election. Given the short time period and need for quick stand up, the ad hoc/short term approach to staffing Wellington functions was seen as appropriate. MIQ and MBIE initially benefited from a huge degree of goodwill from across the Wellington public sector as agencies and people sought to support important mahi. Some agencies responded to requests for assistance by seconding staff, generally for short periods such as 6 weeks to 3 months, in line with the expected timeframe for further funding decisions.
53. As the funding decision was delayed, the ad hoc approach to staffing has become more problematic. Many short term secondees have returned to their home agencies. And home agencies have become less willing to second staff because those in MIQ Wellington have been working in under resourced functions. Contributing to the situation, under resourcing has meant there is very limited capacity in the system to support staff to take sick leave or annual leave while working for MIQ.
54. In addition MIQ Wellington has had to advise on, and respond at pace, to a number of changes to MIQ related policy and operations. These have included:
 - Increased security rollouts across all MIF sites, including the expansion of use of CCTV cameras and the management of privacy considerations that go with that
 - Implementation of the Managed Isolation Allocation System, and the stand-up of the offline (emergency) allocation system
 - The introduction and evolution of bespoke MIF arrangements for sports teams and other groups, and the planning and coordination work required to contract for and implement these arrangements
 - Phasing out of the use of private security guards, and their replacement with around 990 defence force staff operating in MIFs on a rotating basis, and the stand-up of the

necessary support to ensure a rotating workforce is able to undertake the required functions

- Changes in the expectations and frequency around staff testing, and the implementation of multiple related section 11 orders
- Changes to other aspects of the MIQ system, such as the rules in relation to air and maritime crews, and their management in to and out of MIQ
- Changes in fees for critical workers, and the establishment of levers to support achievement of an operational target of 10% of MIQ places being utilised by critical workers.

55. As described above, the systems that support MIQ are still being stood up, and our operating environment continues to evolve and change, meaning what we are building for is constantly shifting (safe travel zones, reduced stays due to vaccines, increase in group arrivals), and at the same time pressure to most efficiently utilise the space in MIQ is growing. Making good decisions in this environment is challenging and resource pressures increase the risk of mistakes. As we know from experience these risks can have significant consequences (actual or perceived).

Looking after our staff

56. MBIE has to meet its responsibilities as an employer and its wider commitments to the wellbeing of its staff. The mixed model of our current staffing base (secondments and fixed term roles) means we have very poor data of the type that would normally be used to demonstrate a strained and under resourced operation. However, we can point to the following issues.
- Our staff want to work in MIQ because they want to help keep New Zealand safe. Whilst this creates an engaged workforce we have identified cases of MIQ staff working while sick, because they have felt unable to take proper sick leave due to workloads.
 - The workloads and the impact of reducing staffing levels even for short periods has also meant that people have been working longer hours than they are contracted for and have a reduced ability to take annual leave. A number of functions (for example allocations, exemptions, and media) will have staff working through the Christmas period, including statutory days. All other Wellington functions will have staff rostered as on-call to ensure emergency coverage during this period.
 - Staff turnover is one way to assess the impact of the work environment on the workforce. We have been able to calculate the turnover rates in three of our Wellington HQ functions and these are in excess of 70% turnover in the six months to 1 January 2021 (suggesting an annualised rate of well over 100%). Turnover at this level creates risks in terms of loss of knowledge, but also has a significant impact on the amount of time that managers are spending on recruitment and induction. Staff turnover due to pressure from the work also creates a negative perception of MIQ and over time may impact on our ability to bring new staff on board.
 - We know that the work that some of our people do can be very upsetting, including having to recommend against allowing people to obtain exemptions from MIQ in extremely difficult personal circumstances. We have moved to offering group counselling sessions for these staff, and were advised by our provider (EAP) that there was a high level of up-take, which speaks to the need to keep supporting MIQ staff wellbeing.

57. If MIQ was resourced to the proposed baseline level, we would be able to ensure we do the right thing for our staff by providing cover for annual and sick leave, reducing large workloads and managing the emotional impact with more downtime.

Finding further savings from MIQ

58. MIQ is expensive to operate. It needs to have in place the arrangements to operate at Level 4 from the point a person steps off a plane through to the point that person has completed their stay and departs.
59. It relies heavily on third party providers and needs a range of wraparound and support services, often 24/7, to deliver on the governments commitments to stop COVID-19 from entering New Zealand though the border. The level of support needed cannot be easily compared to other accommodation based delivery functions (emergency accommodation for example) due to its risk and complexity.
60. These costs cannot be met from within MBIE's existing baseline funding. MBIE has suffered a decline in third party revenue which limits its ability to absorb new functions and costs and maintain its overall financial sustainability. Pre COVID-19, 50 percent of MBIE's departmental revenue was from third-party sources. The remainder is Crown revenue. Third party revenue has dropped to 37 percent this year, principally as a result of a significant fall in revenue from immigration fees. While revenue has decreased, MBIE's workload has remained at similar levels due to regulatory requirements and new activity (border exemptions process for example).
61. If savings are sought from the MIQ operating budget, there are limited options for where this can be found. A reduction in the level of FTEs is one approach though as described in the options below it would be challenging to absorb over and above modest reductions.
62. **Annex Two** does show the impact of a 20% reduction across the non-frontline functions in Wellington. An overall cut of 20% of FTEs based in Wellington would give a saving of approximately \$5.74 million on an annualised basis, however it would have some significant impacts as described. The annex is not showing reductions in front-line operations but does, for context, describe what the impact would be.

Alternative models to deliver these support services

63. No detailed analysis has been completed of the options to deliver the services currently within MIQ differently. It would be possible to contract out some of the services to other agencies or the private sector but any transition would take time and would be unlikely to reduce the cost in the short term.
64. Examples that could be explored further include:
- Out-sourcing the fees and debt recovery services to a third party. Noting when the fees regime was created IRD were consulted on options to manage the fees recovery process through IRD (or similar) government agencies and we were advised that the cost to set up and administer such a function would far outweigh the income generated.
 - Centralising some core functions (communications, policy, legal advice) within the COVID-19 All-of-Government Response Group which would reduce some duplication but would be likely to also reduce the responsiveness of the current model.
 - Moving some operational functions (for example staff testing, blue-tooth technology trials, assurance processes) into the Ministry of Health as part of their COVID-19 response work. This would likely offer minimal cost savings though could offer some efficiencies if aligned to existing processes.

- Re-locating some functions outside of Wellington to manage workforce demands in the capital. This will be more practical for some areas as relocation would either mean incurring the cost of transferring staff to a new place of work (noting there may be contractual limits to this) or bringing a new workforce on-board quickly and limiting risk to business continuity.

Preferred approach

Option One – Status quo (preferred)

65. MBIE's preferred option is for no further reduction in funding or FTE numbers beyond what was already agreed as part of the Cabinet process. We consider the level of resourcing agreed by Cabinet is the level required to build a sustainable MIQ model, which can flex as required to meet Ministerial and public expectations for minimising the risk of COVID-19 to New Zealand while facilitating the flow of New Zealanders and other high priority groups across the border.
66. We need a level of certainty of funding to be able to secure people on a medium term basis. Reduced churn of people, less time recruiting, greater retention of knowledge, are likely to create efficiencies in MIQ. At this point, insufficient resourcing makes it difficult to plan what we need to do in some areas.
67. Over the next 6-12 months, there may be opportunities to improve systems and processes and take out cost. Given the considerable flux in the system, it is difficult to immediately pinpoint where these opportunities may present. However, we will report regularly to the Minister of Finance and the Minister for COVID-19 Recovery when these are identified. Any funding remaining after the wind-down of MIQ will be returned to the Crown [CAB-20-MIN-0511].

Option Two – Immediate reduction of 38 FTEs (\$4.1m per annum) in Wellington Office

68. Should Ministers wish to further reduce resourcing for MIQ with immediate effect, we have identified 38 roles in two Wellington-based teams, where we consider the impact of staff reductions is manageable without seriously undermining the sustainability and public expectations of the MIQ systems. These roles are located within the Intelligence, Data and Insights team (provides data analysis and dashboard reporting) and the Service Quality and Assurance branch. The impacts of reducing FTE count in these areas would be:
 - reduced ability to produce dashboards for Ministerial decision making and provide proactive analytics and data insights
 - reduced capacity in the compliance, risk and debt-recovery space. The National Communications Centre would not be utilised as a centralised function to enable 24/7 contact and monitoring of regional facilities.
69. We advise against a blanket 20% reduction in Wellington-based functions as suggested in the initial tasking as:
 - FTE reductions in some areas which immediately deliver or support frontline services, could undermine public confidence in the MIQ system, and potentially impact the wellbeing of those in frontline roles.
 - It creates operational risks and reduce our ability to collect fees, and increase the risk of not being able to meet the intent of the Border Orders.
 - Our current assessment is the FTE count requested is only sufficient to deliver a baseline of service against the current policy settings. Any incremental changes have broader flow on effects. For example, the establishment of Safe Travel Zones will raise

new policy questions around further opening of the border, how to accommodate new groups within MIQ and the appropriate fees to charge.

70. Ministers may wish to direct officials to do a more fulsome review of possible cost savings, and impacts on outputs and staff wellbeing, with a report back in February. Such an approach would also provide time for a more considered assessment of alternative models of delivery (as outlined in paras 63 to 64), and their likely impact on costs and/or regional labour market constraints. To carry out this review effectively, some resourcing would need to be diverted from other priority projects scheduled for MIQ.
71. As we stabilise, and can do that work, we are open to reducing our overall FTE ask and finding savings if they can be made in a way that limits the impact on our frontline.

Next steps

72. In order to address the pressure on current staff and the number of functions not currently operating at capacity we are in the process of recruiting to fill critical roles immediately. Noting workforce pressures within Wellington we plan to phase the remainder of the roles in over the first quarter of 2021 and this 'vacancy lag' is reflected in our costings considered by Cabinet.
73. If you wish to see further reductions in FTEs or for us to explore other ways to deliver some functions, we would be happy to discuss this with you.

Annexes

Annex One: MIQ Customer Journey

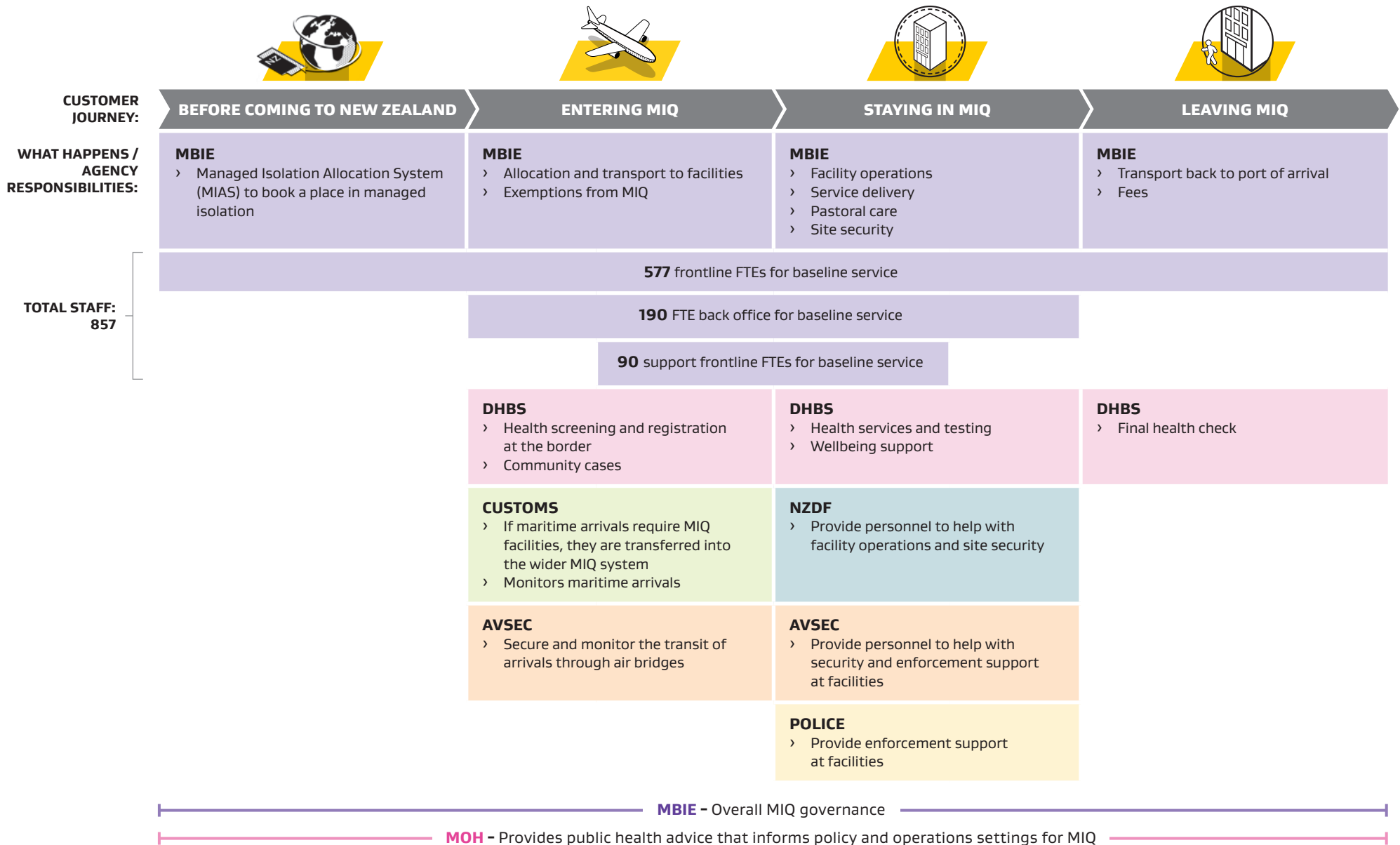
Annex Two: MIQ workforce high level plan by team

Annex Three National Operations Services functions

Annex One: MIQ customer journey

Refer attachment

MIQ Operating Model 79,881 returnees through to 7 December 2020



Annex Two: MIQ workforce high level plan by team

Refer attachment

Annex Two: Wellington MIQ based workforce high level plan by team

Team	Team Function	Current FTE	Proposed Baseline FTE	Proposed FTE Cost (Annualised)	Services Baseline FTE would deliver	80% FTE	20% FTE Reduction Cost Saving (Annualised)	Implication of FTE reductions
Frontline roles								
Allocations and Fees	Process emergency allocation applications for urgent travel to New Zealand Responsible for invoicing MIQ charges Processing of fee waiver applications 7 day function	38	58	\$5.4m	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Timely processing of applications. All areas currently have delays and backlog Ability to deal with further changes e.g to policy settings for charging fees Introduction of vaccine and quarantine exempt zones likely to increase workload of the National Operations Services as enquires increase from people seeking exemptions for having had a vaccine 	No reduction proposed as these are frontline roles		Current workforce at capacity with backlogs. No ability to respond to changes in settings, processing delays and potential BORA issues
Exemptions	Case management of applications to exit managed isolation early, including exceptional circumstances 7 day function	33	40	\$3.8m				Delays in processing applications Reputational risk – time critical function
Operational Planning	Allocation of returnees into managed isolation facilities (MIFs) Management of MIAS voucher system 7 day function	10	14**	\$1.9m				Build-up of duplicate vouchers No ability to run any assurance or maintain integrity of voucher system Inefficient system, unoccupied rooms
Complaints	Responding to returnee complaints, and identification of actions to address systematic issues	3	6	\$0.5m				Increase in response times and increase in complaints backlog
Implementation of staff testing	Managing the testing of all staff (cross-agency) at 32 MIF locations 7 day function	29	38	\$3.6m				Flexibility in the workforce coordination space to allow for absences across facilities and proactive management of this function
Total		113	156	\$15.3m				
Frontline support roles								
Wellbeing Health, Safety and Security	Promote engagement to improve wellbeing, health and safety in the workplace to comply with legislative requirements, as lead PCBU in a complex system of workers and returnees. Manage technological and physical security of premises. Monitoring of critical risks and critical safety. Incident investigations and incident reporting	7	12*	\$1.6m	Increased attention to wellbeing, health and safety for workers and returnees. More rigorous incident investigations, audit and critical risk analysis	10	\$0.3m	Decreased attention to wellbeing, health and safety for workers and returnees. Less rigorous incident investigations, audit and critical risk analysis
Engagement and Communications	Regional communication for MIFs, RIQs and key stakeholders Media engagement, and preparing spokespeople for media interviews	18	29****	\$3.4m	Proactive communications with an integrated information and education work programme. Tailored information and advice to specialist groups	24	\$0.6m	Reduction of information to groups. Reduction of responses out of hours to media. No proactive or events based communications
Compliance	Ensuring standard operating procedures are complied with and implementation of risk review assurance findings	5	10**	\$1.4m	Resource is required for specialist risk management support, advice, guidance and objective assurance	8	\$0.3m	Reduced level of specialist risk management support, advice, guidance and objective assurance
Debt Recovery	Follow up of overdue and unpaid fees invoices. Manage, enforce and collect on the MIQ debt position	0	3	\$0.3m	Robust debt recovery processes with limited debt write-offs	3**	\$0.0m	No or very limited follow up of unpaid or overdue invoices
Group Arrivals	Additional planning and co-ordination of services needed to support large or bespoke groups, including sourcing and commercial arrangements	8	15***	\$2.0m	The ability to frame, develop and implement standardised processes, rather than reactive treatment per group as they are confirmed	12	\$0.4m	Reduction to the number of groups MIQ is able to accommodate

Note: Scaling FTE < 5 20% does not reduce the FTE number (as 20% is less than 1 FTE)

* Three regional roles
*** Eight regional roles

** Four regional roles
**** Fourteen regional roles

Team	Team Function	Current FTE	Proposed Baseline FTE	Proposed FTE Cost (Annualised)	Services Baseline FTE would deliver	80% FTE	20% FTE Reduction Cost Saving (Annualised)	Implication of FTE reductions
Community and Iwi Liaison	Regional roles to ensure full consultation and engagement with local communities and Iwi	1	6**	\$1.0m	The ability to engage Iwi and community at a local level as part of the MIQ system	5	\$0.2m	Iwi engagement disparity across Whenua
Commercial and Supplier Relationships	Strategic relationship management with commercial partners integral to the MIQ system	5	15*	\$2.1m	More proactive engagement with private sector stakeholders to ensure standard approaches to the MIQ system Ability to dedicate more time to procurement process to drive cost savings	12	\$0.4m	Less robust opportunity analysis for procurement and reactive supplier management only
Total		44	90	\$11.8m		74	\$2.1m	
Office Support Roles								
Process Improvement and Programme Delivery	Designing and delivering process change for MIQ to improve returnee experience, cost saving, etc	15	25	\$3.3m	Ability to continue with programmes that deliver MIQ change. Continuously improve the system once initial change programmes responding to policy changes are complete	20	\$0.7m	Work programme based on essential change only. This would mean de-prioritising other activities e.g the work across our Security Enhancement Programme, the COVID card project etc.
Operational Implementation	Designing, developing and implementing operational policies and standard operating procedures for MIQ	3	10	\$1.2m	Ability to develop robust operational policies and standard operating procedures as changes are made to our operations framework	8	\$0.2m	Implementation would need to be prioritised or a light touch approach taken
Assurance/Risk	Identification and management of system-wide risks, ensuring compliance with laws and regulations	1	4	\$0.6m	Resource is required for specialist risk management support, advice, guidance and objective assurance	4	\$0.0m	Reduced level of specialist risk management support, advice, guidance and objective assurance
Business Systems and ICT	Technology development and integrating core systems for MIQ - MIAS - Staff testing technology - Customer management system - Integration of systems across agencies (MBIE, Customs, MoH, Immigration etc) - Frontline technology	16	32	\$6.2m	Strengthening the system development programme and the ability to maintain our technology beyond initial development	26	\$1.2m	Limited customer management and limited integration across MIQ and other agencies' systems
Intelligence, Data and Insights	Data analysis to enable evidence based decision making, including dashboards for Ministerial reporting and to support policy decisions including for class exemptions for large groups	5	28	\$3.3m	Ability to focus on medium term and longer term analysis of trends	23	\$0.6m	No proactive intelligence capability
Finance	Appropriation management, budgeting, forecasting and financial reporting. Scenario modelling for policy changes Supplier processing and payment	6	10	\$1.3m	Improved supplier payment timeframes Improved processes for invoice processing	8	\$0.3m	Limited financial modelling for impacts of policy setting changes such as fees. Delays to supplier payments
Legal	Provide advice on regulatory and legislative change. Negotiate bespoke commercial arrangements	7	9	\$1.4m	Ability to respond appropriately to the speed of legislative change and provide proactive legal advice	8	\$0.2m	Delay to input for legislative changes and slower policy response time
People and Culture	Recruitment of our workforce, workforce planning and employment relations	7	13	\$1.6m	Strategic people plan developed and implemented, to respond to the regularly changing needs of MIQ and the workforce	11	\$0.2m	Difficult to recruit the 250 Security Officers as MBIE employees, so Private Security firms would remain. Unable to respond rapidly to employment relations issues
Health Services Directorate	Supporting MIF and DHB interface, and advising on standards, practices and policy implications	1	5**	\$0.8m	Proactive support for the MIQ / health system interface	4	\$0.2m	Removal of administrative support would impact ability of team to operate effectively
Ministerial Support, Governance and Business Planning	- Ministerial Services and Private Secretaries - Leadership and Oversight - Leading Governance and Business Planning	13	21	\$3.1m	Increased responsiveness to Ministerial requests	17	\$0.1m	Reduced support for Ministerial, OIAs and broader Ministerial support
Policy	Policy analysis, development and advice to Ministers	31	33	\$5.2m	20% FTE reduction already committed to and included in Cabinet Paper (reflected in numbers to left)			
Total		105	190	\$28.0m		162	\$3.6m	

Note: Scaling FTE < 5 by 20% does not reduce the FTE number (as 20% is less than 1 FTE)

* Three regional roles

** Five regional roles

Annex Three: National Operations Services functions

National Operations Services – Delivering Frontline Services

Team	Team Function	Current FTE	Proposed Baseline FTE	Proposed FTE Cost (Annualised)
Allocations and Fees	Process emergency allocation applications for urgent travel into New Zealand Responsible for invoicing MIQ charges Processing of fee waiver applications 7 day function	38	58	\$5.4m
Exemptions	Case management of applications to exit managed isolation early, including exceptional circumstances 7 day function	33	40	\$3.8m
Operational Planning	MIAS allocations	10	14	\$1.9m

Context

MIQ was stood up at pace and we continue to improve and embed new processes, typically starting with very basic processes and then progressively shifting to more streamlined systems. This typically starts with an email inbox which people send requests to, followed by an online editable PDF form which is emailed to an inbox, followed by a secure online form which reduces manual data entry. Given the anticipated short lifetime of MIQ it is unlikely we will reach a fully automated stage in processing, given the time and cost to establish a secure automated platform.

The National Operations Services (NOS) currently comprises:

- Emergency Allocations
- Fees and Waivers
- Exemptions
- Operational Planning

NOS has grown quickly and has needed to respond to additional processes for Government policy decisions.

The teams in NOS are often the first point of contact that returnees have with MIQ. Many returnees obtain their place in MIQ before arrival, and in some cases seek to obtain an exemption or waiver before making a decision on whether or not to travel. NOS teams are contacted directly by returnees before, during and after their MIQ stay.

Emergency Allocations

In October 2020, in preparation for MIAS to go-live, NOS stood up a small team to handle urgent requests where returnees arrived at the airport without a voucher. The Immigration Border Office also handled out of hours requests from people who arrived at an overseas airport with no voucher.

Demand from returning Kiwis has ballooned and so NOS has increased the staff numbers dealing with urgent requests. The establishment of the Emergency Allocations Criteria and subsequent expansion (in early December 2020) has meant a further increase in staffing levels has been needed.

In the first week of the new criteria going live, 180 applications were received and we have seen a slight increase in this number in the last week.

The DCE MIQ and Head of MIQ share decision making, Decision meetings occur 7 days per week. These requests are often distressing, with case managers frequently calling and speaking with people desperate to return to New Zealand.

Emergency Allocations requests are time critical and the team processing them work 7 days per week.

Fees and Waivers

In August 2020, the MIQ fees came into force.

Temporary staff were initially brought on board to assess eligibility and to invoice, as well as staff to process fee waiver requests. The team is now staffed by fixed term and seconded staff.

The current systems lack the ability to automate the processes and so invoicing is mostly manual and time-consuming. We have significant difficulties with the availability and quality of data about returnees. MIAS will improve data completeness for many returnees, however the process itself is expected to still need manual reconciliation of data between different systems.

The fees processes are inconsistent and we face challenges with some groups. For example:

- Maritime arrivals do not register through MIAS and invoicing relies on data provided from shipping agents daily in order to generate invoices.
- A separate process for Aircrew invoicing also requires manual data gathering and reconciliation.
- Further complexity is introduced when there is variations in the duration of stay, room configuration, misspelling of names and other critical information.

The Regulations create some challenges and unintended consequences that increases our processing. For example:

- We are required to invoice by room (as opposed to by traveller), making fee calculations difficult. This is compounded when a room has multiple occupants with different fee obligations. Before invoices can be issued further investigation is required to determine whether fee liability should be waived for the entire room or whether an invoice needs to be generated.
- Amendments to the MIQ fees Regulations, creating a higher fee for Critical Workers with invoices being sent to an employer, will need further processes to be established. This will be onerous in the short term, particularly where large groups arrive together. It is expected that under the current resourcing we will not be able to identify and invoice at the higher level unless a group process to coordinate arrivals is in place.
- An application for a fee waiver may be made before, during or after a returnee's stay in managed isolation. This means that the invoicing team also needs to process credit notes in circumstances where a fee waiver application is approved after an invoice has been sent.

We have introduced a Case Management System to assist with fee waiver applications, but each application must be considered on its merits and a recommendation presented to a decision-maker with the appropriate delegated authority. In many cases, the team needs to request further information or evidence before the assessment can be made. Some of the applications and evidence provided to support the applications can be quite distressing and confronting for staff, so it is important to keep individual workloads manageable.

Since August 2020, the team has received 2,833 applications for fee waivers, and decisions have been issued on 2,613, with 220 in progress.

Exemptions

Responsibility for Exemptions shifted from the Ministry of Health (MoH) to MBIE on 13 July 2020. MBIE stood up an initial team of 12 case managers in the first 8 weeks. The team has since grown to 18 Case Managers to keep pace with demand. On average, 24 Exemptions Applications are received

and 40-42 email enquiries are processed each day. In addition, MBIE took on a backlog of approximately 42 medical-related exemptions and 150 email enquiries.

MBIE quickly built a basic web-based application form and a 3 shift, 7 day per week operation to manage requests for exemptions from MIQ. Initially, the weekly volume of applications ranged between 168-209 (13 July – November 2020). With the introduction of the emergency allocation process, volumes have decreased to an average of 120 per week in December 2020 and case management capability has been diversified to support both functions.

The DCE MIQ and Head of MIQ share decision making with meetings 7 days per week.

People applying for exemptions can have genuine reasons for why their request needs to be considered urgently, and we have seen situations where delays have caused significant anxiety (for the applicant and the staff).

A request takes between 5 and 7 days to process depending on complexity, with an average time to process of 5.4 days. These can be incredibly challenging and it is not unusual for Exemptions staff to need to take time out after a particularly distressing application. Staff often need to call and speak with applicants in person given the distressing nature of their situations and communication by email alone would be inappropriate.

Staff case-manage each application by:

- Doing an initial risk assessment using a public health risk matrix developed by MoH.
- Assessing the information provided and seeking additional supporting documentation from the applicant if necessary.

On average, 13 % of applications require a medical assessment by Homecare Medical, for example if an Exemption application needs to access medical services or their medical needs cannot be adequately met in a hotel setting. A total of 15% of Exemption applications require engagement with Medical Officers of Health in order to fully consider the request for exemption, for example if a visit outside the isolation facility or an early release is sought.

Joining applications require liaison with New Zealand Police and both parties, the person 'joining' and the person 'to be joined' in the managed isolation facility, to ensure that mutual consent is obtained. New Zealand Police conduct a risk assessment for joining applications when a person is applying to join a 'minor' or a 'vulnerable person'.

Operational Planning – key functions

The Operational Planning team are responsible for assigning returnees to a MIF. The team of accommodation planners are split between Wellington and Auckland.

Wellington staff are responsible for:

- Maintaining the loadings of rooms and flight schedules in the back end of the MIAS system.
- Releasing rooms into the front end so travellers can secure vouchers online.
- The majority of allocations for all returnees entering the country. Over time the Auckland team will also start to do more of this function.

Auckland staff are largely responsible for:

- Determining which flights are allocated to which hotels and dealing with any daily operational changes.
- Any vouchers created as the result of an Emergency Allocation.
- Managing customer liaison where flights have changed and vouchers need to be manually moved to another date.
- Over time they will pick up more of the allocation of returnees entering the country.

Upcoming priorities

In addition to managing the current processes in a way that supports those contacting MIQ as well as increasing efficiency and volume management, NOS has a number of other emerging priorities it will need to dedicate resources to.

NOS needs to expand its scope to triage MIAS requests, for example to ensure any special requirements (for example a health or disability need) identified by returnees when they book their voucher are considered, and if possible actioned, prior to returnees' arrival.

At the moment, consideration of these requests depends on the RIQCC or MIF, which may not know which hotel the person will be allocated to, or have the capacity to deal with the request. Consideration at the national level will allow for a degree of consistency around what special requests we seek to fulfil, and which we don't.

Work to strengthen operational allocation planning as MIAS shifts from being largely 'first in first served' to vouchers being allocated based on a range of criteria. This requires both better systems and additional workforce to manage the additional complexity and volume.

We are also working on redesigning and resourcing the fees process to enable invoicing of employers of critical workers as well as upfront invoicing. Due to the various data inputs to this process it will remain largely manual for some time.