



BRIEFING

Group allocation requests March-May 2022

Date:	22 September 2021	Priority:	Medium
Security classification:		Tracking number:	2122-1031

Action sought		
	Action sought	Deadline
Hon Chris Hipkins Minister for COVID-19 Response	Agree that the next group allocations round will cover March-May 2022.	29 September 2021
Hon Kris Faafoi Minister of Immigration	Agree to meet in early December to consider group allocation requests for this round.	
	Refer to the Border Exceptions Ministerial Group	

Contact for telephone discussion (if required)				
Name	Position	Telephone		1st contact
Privacy of natural persons	Manager, Allocation and Supply	Privacy of natural persons		✓
	Senior Advisor, Allocation and Supply			

The following departments/agencies have been consulted
MFAT, MPI, MoE, SportNZ, Treasury, MSD, DPMC, NZTE, MoH MBIE Immigration, MBIE Major Events, MBIE Building Resources and Markets

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 Withdrawn |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 seek your agreement on when the next group allocation round should be held and what time period it should cover.

Recommended action

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

- a **Note** the Border Exceptions Ministerial Group made group allocations for November 2021-March 2022 in July 2021. *Noted*
- b **Note** fewer than half of the March spaces were allocated during this round. *Noted*
- c **Note** *Reconnecting New Zealand* aims to introduce alternative border settings from the first quarter of 2022 onwards. *Noted*
- d **Note** making group allocations for a full five months (to August/September 2022) may not be useful to agencies as the uncertainty around the international environment and New Zealand's border settings means that MIQ may be operating in a different way by this time. *Noted*
- e **Agree** to reopen March for group allocations as part of the next packages round, and that this round will cover March-May 2022. Agree / Disagree
- f **Agree** to meet in early December to make group allocation decisions for this time period. Agree / Disagree
- g **Note** Sport New Zealand and MIQ have agreed to move the Netherlands cricket team group allocation from January to March 2022. *Noted*
- h **Refer** this briefing to the Minister of Research, Science and Innovation, the Minister of Social Development and Employment, the Minister for Economic and Regional Development and the Minister for Māori Development. Agree / Disagree
- i **Agree** this briefing be proactively released with any appropriate withholdings under the Official Information Act 1982. Agree / Disagree

For the Minister for COVID-19 Response

- j **Agree** that the number of group allocation rooms per fortnight should remain at 400 per fortnight.

Agree / Disagree

Privacy of natural persons

Manager, Allocation and Supply
MIQ Policy, MBIE

..... / /



Hon Chris Hipkins
Minister for COVID-19 Response

28 / 09 / 2021

Hon Kris Faafoi
Minister of Immigration

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The next EOI process should also provide an opportunity for groups to put forward bespoke / alternative isolation plans that could be implemented from Feb onwards. This could include things like international students and sports teams using alternative dedicated facilities that we have agreed meet specified standards.

Context

1. The Border Exceptions Ministerial Group makes decisions on group allocations in 'packages', considering all requests for a set time period. The last packages meeting allocated spaces from November 2021 to March 2022.
2. The Minister for COVID-19 Response has declined to allow consideration of out-of-cycle group allocation requests [2122-0300 refers] because of the demands on MIQ space and difficulty in effectively prioritising requests when they are made in isolation.
3. Agencies have requested to know when the next group allocations round will happen and which months it will cover so they can begin preparing requests.

Group allocations for early 2022

Shortening the group allocation window

Previous group allocations covered five-month blocks

4. The previous group allocation rounds each covered a five month period (June-October and November-March). It was felt this timeframe struck a balance of providing groups advance certainty with not planning beyond our ability to predict changes to border settings.
5. If the next round used the same timeframe, it would cover either April to September or March to August 2022.

Reconnecting New Zealand

6. If New Zealand follows the reopening pathway set out in *Reconnecting New Zealand*, it is likely the MIQ system will operate in a different way in August 2022 than it does now. For this reason, MIQ officials feel there is limited value in fixing group allocations this far into the future. However, some applicants would prefer longer-term certainty of allocation to support their planning efforts.
7. While *Reconnecting New Zealand* proposes changes to our border settings from the first quarter of 2022, the first changes will predominantly affect New Zealanders resident in New Zealand returning from travel overseas. Over the medium term there is still likely to be a need for MIQ for those travelling from higher risk countries.

We recommend the next allocation be for a three month block

8. Officials recommend changing the next allocation round to cover three months, rather than five, as it strikes a balance between offering certainty to groups while retaining flexibility to respond to changing border settings.
9. Around two thirds of group allocations are granted to migrants and groups entering New Zealand for the first time, therefore there is value in continuing to provide group allocations in the medium term to provide certainty for these groups.

Reopening group allocations for March 2022

10. Relatively few group allocation requests were received for March 2022 during the last allocation round. This is likely because March 2022 was approximately nine months after requests were due from agencies.
11. Current approved allocations for March 2022 are set out in table one.

Table One

Early March	30 Construction Sector Accord 25 Expo 15 Winter Paralympics	70
Late March	112 refugees 30 Construction Sector Accord	142

12. Officials recommend that a further 200 spaces per fortnight are allocated for March, in addition to the Netherlands cricket team (35 spaces).

Netherlands cricket team

13. The Netherlands cricket team currently has an allocation to enter New Zealand in January. However, Sport New Zealand has requested that the date of their allocation be changed to March.
14. Arriving in March would be advantageous for MIQ, as it would mean less pressure on facilities in early January when there is a high level of demand for staff leave. The Minister for COVID-19 Response has delegated to officials the ability to make changes to the group allocation that have a minimal impact on MIQ capacity. As such, we have agreed with Sport New Zealand to move their entry to March 2022.

Cricket World Cup

15. Cabinet recently discussed the Cricket World Cup (CWC), which is due to take place in March 2022. While the CWC has received group allocations for a majority of teams and match officials, they are seeking around 270 additional group allocation spaces for broadcast and core delivery staff.
16. The ICC has asked for confirmation of these spaces by 24 September in order to proceed with the tournament as planned. The government has made a request that this decision be delayed.
17. Further allocations may be required for the CWC depending on Australia's COVID-19 situation; two teams and numerous supporting personnel were intending to travel from Australia to the competition using quarantine free travel, which has been suspended until at least mid-November
18. Should the CWC not proceed as planned, MIQ officials will provide you with more detailed advice at the time. There are currently 181 vouchers allocated to CWC teams and officials. If these are not needed for any reason, reallocation could be considered. Our starting position on reallocation is that excess vouchers should be released into the general MIAS pool to help New Zealanders and critical workers enter the country. As the first 'lobby' voucher release on 20 September indicated, there is an extremely large number of individuals seeking to enter New Zealand who could benefit from additional spaces.

Timing of allocation round

19. Parliament is adjourned for Christmas recess on 17 December. In order for officials to action decisions taken by the Border Exceptions Ministerial Group, we propose Ministers meet the week of 6 December to decide the March-May 2022 group allocations.
20. The Border Exceptions Ministerial Group may need to consider some border class exceptions prior to this meeting. Officials will be providing a briefing to Ministers shortly on this.

Next steps

21. If you agree to this briefing, we will alert relevant agencies of the timeframes for the next group allocation round. Expressions of Interest will open on 4 October and close on 25 October.
22. The Senior Officials Group will meet the week of 22 November to make recommendations on the makeup of the group allocation packages.