



BRIEFING

Managing vouchers allocated to people subject to very high risk country travel restrictions

Date:	30 April 2021	Priority:	High
Security classification:	In Confidence	Tracking number:	2021-3469

Action sought		
	Action sought	Deadline
Hon Chris Hipkins Minister for COVID-19 Response	Agree to the process for cancelling vouchers for travellers from very high risk countries who are not eligible to enter New Zealand	5 May 2021

Contact for telephone discussion (if required)				
Name	Position	Telephone		1st contact
Kara Isaac	General Manager, Managed Isolation & Quarantine (MIQ) Policy Unit	Privacy of natural persons	✓	
Privacy of natural persons	Senior Policy Advisor	Privacy of natural persons		

The following departments/agencies have been consulted

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 Withdrawn |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 direction on the approach for cancelling vouchers for passengers travelling from very high risk countries who are unable to enter New Zealand. This briefing also provides you with an update on the process to cancel MIAS vouchers held by those traveling from Australia.

Recommended action

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

- a) **Note** that following your recent decision on limiting travel to New Zealand from very high risk countries MIQ have considered options for the treatment of vouchers held by people who are not eligible to enter New Zealand under current travel restrictions ✓
- Noted*
- b) **Note** that MIAS data indicates that from 29 April – 31 May 2021 approximately 1,386 New Zealand citizens and their family members who currently hold vouchers remain eligible to enter New Zealand if they meet pre-departure requirements and can secure an accompanying air route; ✓
- Noted*
- c) **Note** that MIAS data indicates that from 29 April – 31 May 2021 approximately 1,316 permanent residents and visa holders who currently hold a voucher for MIQ are not eligible to enter New Zealand under the current restrictions; ✓
- Noted*
- d) **Agree** to either:
- Option A - MBIE identifies permanent residents and temporary visa holders holding MIAS vouchers and cancels their voucher if their intended travel date is within two weeks, unless they can provide evidence that they can still legally enter New Zealand and have a confirmed flight (*recommended option*)
- Please make sure cancellations align with reconsideration of the Very High Risk designations. Agree / Disagree
- OR
- Option B - MBIE does not intervene and relies on travellers affected by travel restrictions to cancel their own vouchers (*not recommended*)
- Agree Disagree
- e) **Agree** that MBIE follow this policy of identifying and cancelling vouchers in two-week blocks until the travel restrictions are lifted, or you are advised otherwise
- Agree / Disagree

- f) **Agree** that MBIE provide identified travellers with a 48 hour window to provide relevant evidence that they are still legally able to enter New Zealand, and have a confirmed flight, prior to cancelling their voucher
 Agree / Disagree
- g) **Agree** that MBIE advise affected travellers that when the restrictions are lifted, they should look in the first instance to re-book through MIAS which continues to have strong availability of vouchers from May - July
 Agree / Disagree
- h) **Agree** for officials to only support affected travellers to secure space in managed isolation if there is no availability in MIAS
 Agree / Disagree
- i) **Agree** for officials to manually allocate vouchers from unused group or emergency allocations for this purpose if necessary
 Agree / Disagree
-
- j) **Agree** that this briefing be proactively released with any appropriate withholdings under the Official Information Act 1993.
 Agree / Disagree



Kara Isaac
General Manager, MIQ Policy
Managed Isolation & Quarantine, MBIE

30/4/21



Hon Chris Hipkins
Minister for COVID-19 Response

04 / 05 / 2021

Background

1. You have recently agreed to introduce a three-level system to guide decisions around travel restrictions into New Zealand. From 11:59pm on 28 April 2021 travel to New Zealand from very high risk countries is temporarily limited to New Zealand citizens, their partners and/or dependent children, and parent(s) of a dependent child (where the child is a New Zealand citizen). All other travellers must also have been outside of a very high risk country for the 14 days prior to travel to New Zealand.
2. This decision results in approximately 1,316 people who currently have an MIQ voucher for 29 April – 30 May that are no longer be able to travel to New Zealand, or who will need an approved humanitarian exemption under the Air Border Order and / or the COVID-19 Public Health Response (Isolation and Quarantine) Order 2020 to enter New Zealand.
3. MBIE seeks your direction on an approach to cancel Managed Isolation Allocation System (MIAS) vouchers whose holders are no longer able to enter New Zealand.

Vouchers are held by people who are no longer eligible to enter New Zealand

4. The introduction of travel restrictions for persons who have been in very high risk countries presents new issues for MIQ. As exemptions to the travel restrictions are allowed for New Zealand citizens, their partners and/or dependent children, and parent(s) of a dependent child, a blunt cancellation of all MIAS vouchers from very high risk countries is not an appropriate approach.
5. The table below presents the MIAS booking data on travellers that are affected by the very high risk restrictions from the 29 April - 30 May 2021 (as at 23 April at 4:45pm). MIAS data relies on a self-declaration from travellers of their citizenship and visa status.

MIAS data on travellers from very high risk countries 29 April – 30 May 2021

Type	Brazil	India	Pakistan	PNG	Grand Total
New Zealand Citizen	9	504	37	23	573
New Zealand Permanent Resident	11	813	39	5	868
Temporary Visa Holder	10	675	3		688
Total	30	1,992	79	28	2,129

NZ Citizens travelling with accompanying Permanent Residents or Temporary visa holders (29 April-30 May 2021)

Type	Brazil	India	Pakistan	PNG	Grand Total
New Zealand Citizen	9	504	37	23	573
People travelling with NZ citizen	5	220	11	4	240
Total	14	724	48	27	813

6. MIAS data from (29 April – 30 May 2021) has identified that there are:
 - approximately 1,386 travellers that currently hold vouchers and are eligible to enter New Zealand from very high risk countries and;
 - approximately 1,316 travellers unable to enter New Zealand under current travel restrictions
7. The restrictions present a new challenge from MBIE's previous approach to cancelling vouchers that are no longer required by travellers. As it is not a blanket restriction, a determination of whether a traveller is exempt from the travel restriction is required. This differs from the introduction of Quarantine-Free Travel (QFT) from Australia, Cook Islands and Niue, where the travellers on direct flights to New Zealand could be easily identified and removed from MIAS.
8. There is also additional complexity as there is no end-date associated with the suspension, so MBIE is unable to determine with certainty whether vouchers will be available for affected travellers when the restrictions are lifted.
9. In addition the United Arab Emirates has banned passengers from India until May 14 with Emirates airline suspending all passenger flights from India as a result. As at the 29 April, travellers affected by this suspension are, in general, not proactively cancelling their MIAS vouchers as there is no incentive for them to do so.
10. If we do not cancel vouchers held by travellers who are not currently eligible to enter New Zealand then there will be wasted MIQ rooms that could be used by other travellers. Proactive voucher cancellations are also required in order to have more accurate numbers of forecast arrivals for planning and cohorting purposes.

Options to manage voucher cancellation process

11. MBIE's current policy for flight disruptions is to assist passengers where the airline has cancelled their flight (i.e. outside of the passenger's control), and the new flight arrives on a different date. There is no existing policy for government-caused flight disruptions, except for QFT, where all vouchers were cancelled and QFT flights removed from MIAS.
12. When the suspension was first announced for India on the 11 April 2021, you committed that affected travellers will be aided by MBIE to secure another MIAS voucher. The current indefinite suspension, the addition of further countries as very high risk, and the potential for suspensions to be an enduring feature, poses additional challenges which need to be considered.
13. MBIE has identified two options for cancelling vouchers for travellers affected by the very high risk country travel restrictions.

- Option A – MBIE identifies permanent resident and temporary visa holder travellers affected by the travel restrictions holding MIAS vouchers and cancels their voucher if their intended travel date is within two weeks, unless they can provide evidence within 48 hours that they can still legally enter New Zealand and have a confirmed flight (*preferred option*)
 - Option B – MBIE does not intervene and relies on travellers to cancel their own vouchers, if they are unable to travel (*not recommended*)
14. While Option B minimises the risk that no vouchers are cancelled for travellers that may be eligible for travel, the risk that a high number of rooms are unavailable to other travellers is very high. Due to the interests of ensuring that these rooms are available for other travellers, we do not recommend this option.
 15. Option A is the preferred option, where MBIE proactively communicates with affected permanent residents and temporary visa holders (that we are able to identify) and cancels their vouchers, unless they can prove they are still legally able to travel to New Zealand and have a confirmed flight. There is a minor risk that we might not identify all of the appropriate travellers or cancel vouchers of misrepresented eligible travellers (ie a New Zealand citizen that accidentally identifies as a resident), as MIAS data relies on self-declared data. We will deal with any of these on a case-by-case basis.

Option A is recommended

16. MBIE needs to strike a balance between minimising the risks of room under-utilisation and ensuring that eligible travellers from very-high risk countries retain their vouchers. While we have a high degree of confidence in the data within MIAS, there is a small risk that travellers mis-represent themselves and may be deemed ineligible to travel when they actually are (or vice versa).
17. Officials propose that this cancellation process is used for travellers holding MIAS vouchers two weeks out from when the restrictions are in place. Under the current suspension, this will affect bookings up until 16 May 2021. This policy would then continue for travellers in the next two week period, until the travel suspension is lifted or MBIE advises you otherwise.

Re-booking affected travellers

18. MBIE proposes to advise travellers with cancelled vouchers that when the restrictions are lifted, they should look, in the first instance, to re-book through MIAS by choosing an available date. There continues to be strong availability in MIAS from May – July and the first release of spaces for August – October are due to occur in the coming weeks.
19. If there is no availability on MIAS for any dates, travellers will be advised that they can contact MIQ for assistance. MBIE will also advise that they can apply through the emergency allocation process where urgent travel is required.

Next steps

20. Depending on your decision, MBIE will implement your preferred option by 7 May.
21. If you agree to progress with Option A, then MBIE will engage with affected travellers with MIAS bookings in the next fortnight and on a rolling two-week horizon until the restrictions are lifted or MBIE advises you otherwise.
22. MBIE will update all communications and website material to advise travellers from very high risk countries of this process.