



Proactive Release

The following documents have been proactively released by the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet (DPMC), on behalf of Minister for COVID-19 Response, Hon Dr Ayesha Verrall:

COVID-19 Response Weekly Reports – July 2022

The following documents have been included in this release:

Title of paper: COVID-19 Response Weekly Report 1 July 2022

Title of paper: COVID-19 Response Weekly Report 8 July 2022

Title of paper: COVID-19 Response Weekly Report 15 July 2022

Title of paper: COVID-19 Response Weekly Report 22 July 2022

Title of paper: COVID-19 Response Weekly Report 29 July 2022

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MINISTRY OF BUSINESS,
INNOVATION & EMPLOYMENT
HĪKINA WHAKATUTUKI



DEPARTMENT OF THE
PRIME MINISTER AND CABINET
TE TARI O TE PIRIMIA ME TE KOMITI MATUA



Te Whatu Ora
Health New Zealand



NEW ZEALAND
FOREIGN AFFAIRS & TRADE
MANATŪ AORERE



BORDER EXECUTIVE BOARD

COVID-19 Response Weekly Report




29 July 2022

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1. Status Summary

Key		
Symbol	Colour	Meaning
	Green	On track, no roadblocks, no significant delays anticipated
	Amber	Slow progression, some delays, some roadblocks present
	Red	Not progressing, on hold, significant delays

Border

Border Reopening and International Connections	Agency	Last Week	→ This Week	Agency Comment
	Te Whatu Ora			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Maritime Border Order changes come into effect on 31 July, reopening the maritime border to all vessels. Guidance to Public Health Units on these changes has been circulated. Work is underway to support cruise ship reopening. The Director-General of Health signed a memo/exemption notice on 26 July 2022 to support the issuing of Pratique in the instance of COVID-19 cases onboard. Te Whatu Ora is beginning scenario planning for instances where cruise vessels in New Zealand waters require clinical support.
	BEB			Air border implementation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The flow of applications for all work visas including the Accredited Employer Work Visa (AEWV) continues to be relatively slow and steady, and the queue of applications to be processed continues to be under control. Step 5 – applications from both onshore and offshore based clients for student and remaining visitor visas reopen on 31 July 2022. Immigration New Zealand is as prepared as can be, noting that visa application volumes are unknown and can only be estimated, whilst implementing a new visa processing system at the same time. An increase in volumes of passengers from Samoa and Tonga are expected in the coming weeks.
	BEB			Maritime border programme <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Programme has moved to amber status s9(2)(f)(iv) Agencies are ready for the reopening of the maritime border from 11.59pm, 31 July 2022 with a few smaller recreational vessels and one promotional cruise expected in August and September 2022. The Director General of Health has approved an exemption for ships arriving with cases of COVID-19 on board which gives vessels legal authority that Pratique would not be automatically withheld. A public announcement on the reopening of the maritime border to passenger vessels will be wrapped into a wider announcement on changing border settings by the Ministers of Immigration and Tourism.
	MFAT			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Niue: Niue has again eliminated Omicron. It has no current cases of COVID-19, with the latest border cases having recovered. Tonga: Tonga's border will reopen from 1 August, including the removal of MIQ requirements and government pre-approval for travellers. Air New Zealand will progressively increase its flights. Solomon Islands: A cohort of 112 Recognised Seasonal Employer (RSE) workers from Solomon Islands arrived in New Zealand on 22 July – the first group from there since November 2021 (the final MIQ group allocation for RSE).

Pacific Travel

Isolation and Quarantine

Self-Isolation	Managed Isolation	Agency	Last Week	→ This Week	Agency Comment
		MBIE	●	●	<p>Decommissioning of Facilities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To date a total of 29 facilities have been decommissioned and handed back. The 'make good' work on these facilities continues. The final three facilities (Waipuna, Jet Park Auckland and Holiday Inn) have now closed to guests and will be handed back on 29 July 2022. Decommissioning of the three regional offices is now also underway and on track to be completed by mid-August. <p>MIQ Readiness Programme</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> MBIE remains on track to deliver Version 2 of the Readiness Plan by 29 July 2022.
		Te Whatu Ora	●	●	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In collaboration with the Ministry of Health, the National Investigation and Tracing Centre provided advice to the COVID-19 Assessment Committee for the monthly review of isolation and quarantine requirements. This advice was discussed at the COVID-19 Assessment Committee meeting on 27 July 2022 and will be provided to Ministers for consideration through the usual COVID-19 Protection Framework traffic light review process.

Community Protection

Surveillance and Testing	Care in the Community	Agency	Last Week	→ This Week	
		Te Whatu Ora	●	●	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As at 22 July, an average of 2,966 PCR tests were processed per day. The rolling seven-day average is 2,966. Currently, 97% of PCRs have a turnaround time under 24 hours. As part of surveillance activity, Te Whatu Ora is closely monitoring the Whole Genome Sequencing (WGS) process for positive PCR samples across the border, hospitals & community settings. District targets have been identified and communicated with the laboratory network and ESR to ensure there is good representation from all regions based on population. As of the week ending 3 July: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 88% of arrivals uploaded at least one RAT result – this is a 2% decrease from last week's data 3.8% of uploaded RATs were positive 49% of positive RATs had a follow up PCR – this is a 2% decrease from the last week's data 17% of positive border PCR samples were sequenced in this period. For the most recent week reported (3 July) the decrease in sequencing is due to the time lag between receiving the PCR sample and completing the WGS. As per previous reports, we expect this to reconcile in next week's data set. Weekly targets have been set for sequencing of imported (300), hospital (200) and community cases (1,000). We are currently tracking below target for hospital and community cases, and are working closely with ESR to ensure adequate samples are processed each week, noting that some samples cannot be sequenced due to the high CT value or inadequate samples. Target volumes for districts have been revised and implemented, to ensure sampling per region is proportionate to the population size and the target cohorts are also captured (imported cases and hospital). We continue to monitor the impact of removing pre-departure testing requirements on imported case numbers and sequencing plan
		Te Whatu Ora	●	●	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> From 28 July, Oral COVID-19 antiviral medicines nirmatrelvir with ritonavir (Paxlovid™) and molnupiravir (Lagevrio®) will be reclassified as restricted (pharmacist-only) medicines. This will enable pharmacists to supply, without a prescription from an authorised prescriber, antiviral medication to people who meet the Pharmac access criteria. There will be a phased introduction of this service to pharmacists, with the initial supply of antivirals going to pharmacies who already dispense these medicines, followed by an invitation for expressions of interest soon afterwards to all other pharmacies. Pharmacists will have access to COVID Clinical Care Module (CCCM). This access will capture which COVID-19 therapeutic medicine is being supplied, enable better two-way communication with GPs and increase visibility of the supply of antivirals by COVID-19 Care in the Community. Information and training webinars on how to supply oral COVID-19 antiviral medicines and how to use the COVID Clinical Care Module (CCCM) were held on 26 and 27 July. Further to this, the Pharmaceutical Society of New Zealand has developed free training modules for pharmacists on all the clinical and operational components of CCCM. The draft guidance information on Advance Prescriptions for Oral COVID-19 Antiviral Medicines was released on 22 July. Antiviral medicines can only be dispensed if a person has COVID-19, however the advanced prescription means that there will be fewer steps to complete when filling out the prescription, and that someone who is at high risk of hospitalisation will be able to access these medications when needed and begin treatment within the recommended 5 days of symptom onset. The COVID-19 Care in the Community operations team has been supporting the rollout of the Reclassification of Oral COVID-19 antiviral medicines. The team has been working with Pharmacy Portfolio managers to enable community pharmacists' access to CCCM, working alongside Data and Digital to ensure a smooth transition of pharmacists onto CCCM. The COVID-19 Care in the Community Framework has been sent to the Ministry of Social Development, Māori Health Authority and the Minister of Health for endorsement. The Framework is expected to be online once all partners have endorsed the document.

*No update was received on Contact Tracing or Technology Updates from Te Whatu Ora.

Vaccination

Implementation and operation	Agency	Last Week	This Week	
	Te Whatu Ora	●	●	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As at 11.59pm 26 July, 273,884 second booster doses have been administered, with 70,072 administered in the last seven days. There are a further 12,017 doses booked in BookMyVaccine. 22% of all eligible Māori and Pacific peoples aged 50 years and over have received a second booster, and 40% of non-Māori / non-Pacific peoples aged 65 years and over have received a second booster. Uptake of first boosters decreased 12% in the week ending 25 July, with 5,775 administered. Paediatric second dose uptake remains steady, with 2,965 administered in the previous seven days to 25 July. For the week 18 to 23 July, 55 national phone campaigns were undertaken to support population uptake on second booster vaccinations, with a focus on prioritising eligible Māori and Pacific populations. In total, 30,018 eligible people were called with around 45.72% (11,315) answering these calls. Of those that answered, 6.93% (785) went on to book an appointment while 37.25% (4,215) advised they do not require assistance as they will attend a walk-in or manage this through their primary health provider. Over the past fortnight 216 of 673 scheduled second booster visits to Aged Residential Care (ARC) facilities took place across the motu. Nationally, Nelson Marlborough is the furthest along having completed visits to 85% of local facilities. Capital & Coast are close behind having completed 78% visits. A number of vaccination events continue to be held across the motu. There is an increasing focus on running events which focus on collective aspects of whānau hauora and wellbeing. A number of these events also provide support in the form of kai vouchers, movie vouchers and winter wellness packs.

System Readiness & Planning

	Agency	Last Week	This Week	Agency Comment on Status of Focus Area
System Readiness	Te Whatu Ora	●	●	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As at 21 July, there are 51.8m RATs on hand. Based on quantities dispatched over the last two weeks, presumed stock is 15 weeks' supply. 96K orders were placed in the RAT Requester system over the week of 18 July (covering 338K people). As at 21 July, Healthpoint showed 534 sites offering RAT collection and/or testing (including 376 community collection sites, 86 Community Testing Centres, and 126 providers supporting priority population groups). 154 delivery orders were placed in the last week for those unable to collect RATs (covering 349 people), including Targeted Rural Service, immunocompromised, aged, and disability. This was an increase from 68 orders last week, following eligibility criteria changes for RATs requests. As at 21 July, Healthpoint showed 398 sites offering free masks. Current total procedure mask stock on hand: 108.9M (includes masks used in clinical settings), and current N95 stock on hand: 24.3M (includes N95s used in clinical settings). 670K dispatches of N95s for community use have been processed in the last 7 days. This represents a significant increase on previous dispatches. 17.2M dispatches of procedure masks for community use have been processed in the last 7 days. This also represents a significant increase on previous weeks. There are no significant issues to report. Collection sites continue to be encouraged to place more regular orders, to mitigate storage and order delay issues. Collection site orders are being prioritised for dispatch.
	DPMC	●	●	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Catalogue of Response Measures V2.4 is complete and work continues to develop V3.0S9(2)(f)(iv). The System Readiness Exercise is now in detailed planning and is planned for 09 Aug 2022 and is centred on the National Response Group (NRG) to provide advice. Fortnightly NRG meetings remain in place to maintain oversight and integration across the AoG system, however this may reduce to monthly dependent on assessed need. Ad-hoc working groups and meetings will be called as necessary to resolve system problems.
Planning for Next Phase	Te Whatu Ora	●	●	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The COVID-19 Protection Framework Assessment Committee (CPFAC) met on 27 July to undertake a review of the COVID-19 Protection Framework (CPF) colour settings for New Zealand, and isolation periods for cases and household contacts. The CPFAC recommended for the Orange traffic light setting to be maintained and no change to isolation periods for cases and household contacts.

*No update was received on Health Supply Chain from Te Whatu Ora.

2. Insight of Note by the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet

2.1 Overview of New Zealand's COVID-19 Border Restrictions

Introduction

The Insights and Reporting Team in DPMC's COVID-19 Group have examined the use of COVID-19 restrictions at the New Zealand air border as a key measure to reduce the spread of COVID-19. This provides a high-level overview of New Zealand's COVID-19 border restrictions and their impact, as well as brief comparison to Australia's border restrictions.

Over the first 12 months of the pandemic, New Zealand introduced several layers of border restrictions to prevent COVID-19 from entering the community. These included closing the border to non-citizens and non-residents, pre-departure testing, mandatory quarantine in a government managed isolation facility, a regimen of post-arrival COVID-19 testing, and vaccination requirements for incoming travellers and border workers. These restrictions played a significant role in reducing community transmission of COVID-19 in the first two years of the pandemic.

Though Australia introduced many similar border restrictions to New Zealand across the course of the pandemic, effective comparison is challenging given the unique legal context in which both countries' restrictions can be exercised. Evidence indicates, however, that New Zealand was able to delay the introduction of COVID-19 community transmission of new variants for longer than Australia.

Closing the Border

The New Zealand government closed the international border to all foreign nationals on 19 March 2020, with entry restricted to New Zealand citizens, those with a residence class visa, or those with a special exemption.¹

² This reduced the quantity of people coming to New Zealand, and with it the number of COVID-19 cases.

Pre-departure COVID-19 Testing Requirements

Proof of a negative COVID-19 test prior to departure ('pre-departure test' or 'PDT') was introduced on 16 January 2021 for those arriving from select countries where the Alpha variant had been detected, and later expanded to arrivals from most other countries on 8 February 2021.^{3 4} The nature of these requirements shifted with the development and improvement of COVID-19 testing methods and the emergence of new variants. For example, at the start of 2021 initial requirements were proof of a PCR test within 72 hours of departure. Due to global testing practicalities, such as PCR testing being less available in many countries, this shifted to either proof of a PCR test within 48 hours of departure, or proof of a negative Rapid Antigen Test (RAT) within 24 hours of departure.

While pre-departure testing requirements likely reduced the number of COVID-19 infected travellers from entering New Zealand, how many cases were prevented from entering are not known. Preliminary evidence from the Ministry of Health in July 2022 suggests that PDT requirements may have reduced the amount of COVID-19 infected travellers from boarding an aircraft by approximately half.⁵

On 20 June 2022 the PDT requirements for international arrivals were removed. In the week following the removal of PDT requirements, rates of arrivals testing positive for COVID-19 increased. In the week ending 3 July 2022, approximately 4 percent of recent arrivals reported a positive test on days 0/1, compared to 1 percent prior to the removal of PDT.⁶ While this may support the estimate above, this rise may also reflect an increase in cases worldwide, driven by the new Omicron subvariants.

Despite this increase in COVID-19 prevalence at the border, the total number of cases detected on arrival is much less than the number now being reported each day in the community. By the week of 4 July 2022, between 150 and 400 COVID-19 cases were being reported by arrivals per day, compared to a rolling seven-day average of 7,437 community cases per day for the same period.^{7 8}

Vaccination Requirements and Border Worker Testing

Border workers¹ were required to be vaccinated at air and seaports on 30 April 2021, due to their higher risk of infection from overseas arrivals, with the mandate lasting until 2 July 2022.⁹ The vaccination requirement was extended to all non-citizen international arrivals (including residents) on 1 November 2021, requiring proof of full vaccination from COVID-19, which is a full course of one of 22 New Zealand government approved vaccines.¹⁰ The vaccination requirement for New Zealand residents arriving from overseas was lifted on 6 May 2022 as infection risk had shifted from the border.¹¹

At the time of the implementation of vaccination requirement, vaccines were found to be highly effective at reducing the risk of contracting earlier variants of COVID-19, with some vaccines reducing infection rates by up to 65 percent, compared to those unvaccinated.¹² Though the function of vaccination requirements in preventing infection have decreased slightly with the Omicron variant, being fully vaccinated for COVID-19 continues to protect people against severe disease, regardless of the variant. Recent evidence shows that COVID-19 vaccinations have become progressively less effective at preventing infection with the emergence of the Omicron sub-variants. Vaccination efficacy against infection with Omicron is estimated to be between 40 and 55 percent shortly after two doses of Pfizer, though reduces over the course of three months.¹³ Studies do suggest, however, that vaccination continues to offer protection from developing severe disease from new COVID-19 variants, with the most severe infections amongst those who are unvaccinated.¹⁴ Though vaccination requirements may be less effective at preventing infections of new COVID-19 variants, they remain a key tool to protect New Zealanders from developing severe disease.

Another measure utilised was regular border worker testing. Frequent PCR testing was implemented to minimise transmission to the community. As the response strategy shifted to minimisation and protection, and with widespread community transmission, infection in border workers is no longer seen as a greater risk than infection in the general population and was revoked from 30 June 2022.¹⁵

Managed Isolation and Quarantine & Post-Arrival COVID-19 Testing

By 9 April 2020, the vast majority of international arrivals became subject to a mandatory period in a MIQ.¹⁶ ¹⁷ The number of MIQ facilities grew rapidly from 18 facilities in the Auckland area in April 2020, to 31 facilities across five regions by July 2020. The operating model of MIQ shifted over the course of the pandemic, reflecting new knowledge about controlling transmission of the virus, information around emerging variants, levels of vaccination and COVID-19 in the community, vaccination status of the traveller, and demand for MIQ spaces. In line with the government's elimination approach to COVID-19 in the community, a minimum period of 14 days in MIQ was required from April 2020 to November 2021. Following the government's shift to a suppression approach to COVID-19, mandatory MIQ periods were subsequently reduced to seven days in combination with three days of self-isolation for those fully vaccinated. In response to the Omicron variant, MIQ stays were increased to 10 days in December 2021, and then reduced back to seven days in February 2022 as part of Step 2 of Reconnecting New Zealanders. By March 2022, the government announced the end of mandatory managed isolation for all international arrivals.

Post-arrival COVID-19 testing was initially introduced during points of an individual's MIQ stay to monitor international arrivals for COVID-19 infection. The nature of this requirement shifted across the pandemic as MIQ and post-arrival isolation requirements eased. Requirements changed from three PCR tests over 14 days in 2020, to two PCR tests over seven days in late-2021. In early 2022 MIQ testing shifted to RAT's on day 0/1 and day 5/6 after PCR testing capacity became overwhelmed with demand following the Omicron outbreak. Use of RAT's on day 0/1 and day 5/6 continues to be in use for international arrivals following the end of MIQ and self-isolation requirements.

By late-2021, 2,148 positive COVID-19 cases were detected during post-arrival testing in MIQ as imported cases².¹⁸ That is 2,148 cases that were prevented from entering the community and transmitting to many more people.¹⁹

¹ Vaccination mandate included border workers and their household contacts.

² International passengers and crew entering the country who caught COVID-19 overseas or during the journey

However, 490 people tested positive as an 'import-related case'. Import-related cases refer to people exposed to international returnees, and includes close contacts, other returnees in managed isolation or quarantine, and staff working at the border or in managed facilities. The majority of these were other people in the same "bubble" as the original case (such as family members), with instances also recorded of transmission to fellow MIQ guests and border workers. MIQ guests and border workers were tested regularly to reduce further transmission into the community.²⁰

Since the beginning of the MIQ system until 10 December 2021, a total of 19 absconder events involving 25 people took place. Nine of the absconders (seven incidents) were people from the community who had been community COVID-19 cases that were placed in MIQ.^{21 22}

MIQ played a central role preventing COVID-19 from becoming widespread through communities in New Zealand, through enabling isolation of those testing positive, while allowing nearly 230,000 travellers to enter New Zealand during the pandemic.²³ The MIQ system was also a key tool that allowed time for the rollout of the COVID-19 vaccination program, reducing community transmission of COVID-19 while enabling the public time to get vaccinated.²⁴

Comparison to Other Countries' Border Restrictions

Other countries were analysed in order to identify if any had a combination of border restrictions that were comparable to New Zealand. However, the combination and method of application of the border restrictions in New Zealand are largely unique. The closest comparison identified was Australia, which utilised similar restrictions, but were applied differently, resulting in varied outcomes. Similar to New Zealand, Australia restricted entry to only residents and citizens, used MIQ facilities for international arrivals, PDT's, vaccination requirements and post arrival COVID-19 tests in some states. However, there were key differences, for example, in New Zealand, those staying in MIQ generally had access to exercise space, whereas this was not necessarily the case in Australia.²⁵ Additionally, the approach in New Zealand was informed by legal obligations under the New Zealand Bill of Rights Act, which provides a unique framework in which public health restrictions can be exercised. In addition, many states in Australia did not subject MIQ guests and border workers to routine COVID-19 testing, as compared to New Zealand. This may have resulted in under-counting COVID-19 cases attributed to MIQ breaches across Australia.²⁶ Differences like this provide important context for comparing the two countries. There was a study identified which suggests that from June 2020 to June 2021, New Zealand MIQ facilities had a higher proportion of border workers, health workers, and other MIQ linked community infections by an imported COVID-19 case. By 31 March 2021, New Zealand had experienced 10 of these incidents with 145,759 travellers, while Australia identified 22 of these incidents for 499,223 travellers.²⁷ As a proportion per 1,000 positive cases in quarantine, this was 10 in New Zealand, and 5.2 in Australia.²⁸ However, this is explainable given the different applications of the border restrictions and the legal context in which these restrictions were applied.

New Zealand was able to delay the introduction of COVID-19 community transmission of new variants for longer than Australia. Australia experienced several community outbreaks of COVID-19 earlier than New Zealand, including one in June 2020, and a Delta outbreak in June 2021.^{29 30 31} Omicron was first detected in the community in Australia in early December 2021, following the reduction of some international border restrictions in particular states that had reached high levels of vaccination and were dealing with ongoing COVID-19 community transmission.^{32 33} In comparison, community transmission of variants in New Zealand were detected later than in Australia including an outbreak in August 2020, and a Delta outbreak in August 2021, with the first community case of Omicron detected in mid-January 2022.^{34 35}

Thank you to the following teams that assisted with this report: the Ministry of Business, Innovation, and Employment, the Ministry of Health, the New Zealand Customs Service, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade.

References for this Insight of Note report are at the end of this document.

3. Ministry of Health

3.1 Policy/Programme Updates

3.1.1 COVID-19 Testing Innovation workshop

On 26 July 2022, the Manatū Hauora – Ministry of Health Therapeutics Policy team and COVID-19 Policy Group attended the Testing Innovation workshop hosted by the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet, along with colleagues from the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment.

This workshop examined barriers to innovation in testing and opportunities to inform advice to Minister Verrall as the Minister for COVID-19 Response, and Research, Science and Innovation.

This work is relevant to the scope of the Therapeutic Products Bill which will regulate diagnostic testing. We will ensure alignment between the testing innovation and therapeutic products regulation programmes.

3.1.2 Technical Advisory Group: update

COVID-19 TAG

The COVID-19 Technical Advisory Group (COVID-19 TAG) did not meet in the week commencing 18 July 2022. The next COVID-19 TAG meeting is scheduled for 12 August 2022.

CV TAG

The COVID-19 Vaccine Technical Advisory Group (CV TAG) met on 19 July 2022 and discussed the following items.

- clarification of booster recommendations for pregnant people
- vaccine rollout
- mortality and hospitalisation risk data
- booster uptake data
- update on the approach to future vaccination
- updates on topical matters.

The next CV TAG meeting is scheduled for 16 August 2022.

Therapeutics TAG

The COVID-19 Therapeutics Technical Advisory Group (Therapeutics TAG) did not meet in the week commencing 18 July 2022. The next Therapeutics TAG meeting is scheduled for 5 August 2022.

CT TAG

The COVID-19 Testing Technical Advisory Group (CT TAG) did not meet in the week commencing 18 July 2022. The next CT TAG meeting was scheduled for 26 July, but this meeting has now been rescheduled to 2 August 2022.

3.1.3 Communications Issues and Activities

As at 26 July 2022

Date	Activity	Lead agency	Comms material	Ministerial Involvement
31 July	Announcement to be made regarding the reopening of the maritime border (Maritime Border Order signed and gazetted 11 July 2022; original announcement for the same day was postponed). Led by Ministers Wood and Nash.	Manatū Hauora	Communications support with media release and reactives.	Ministers Nash and Wood
4 August	Release of Statistics New Zealand Peer Review of Health Survey User (HSU) data and release of 2021 HSU Dataset.	Manatū Hauora and Statistics NZ	Communications plan being drafted by National Immunisation Programme.	TBC
For information	Receiving queries on whether or not travellers will get COVID treatment if they get sick and are/aren't from a country with reciprocal agreement.	FYI	FYI	FYI

4. Te Whatu Ora

4.1 Updated Return-to-Work Guidance for Healthcare Workers

A revised version of the return-to-work Healthcare worker guidance has been published on the Ministry of Health website.

This document provides guidance for staff returning to work from isolation as COVID-19 cases or contacts. It has been developed by the National Investigation and Tracing Centre in consultation with the Northern Region Health Coordination Centre and representatives from across the Ministry of Health. Taking into account feedback from the sector, the guidance has been updated to be more user-friendly and reflect current contact management settings.

Proactively Released

5. Managed Isolation and Quarantine Weekly Report

5.1 Transition and Readiness

5.1.1 Workforce

The formal change process for the remaining facilities, and our regional and national offices continues; this includes the appointment of people into roles and any mitigation of capability gaps. The new operating model is expected to be in place by 01 August.

On 5 September, MIQ will cease to operate as its own group and will be absorbed into the Labour, Science and Enterprise Group (LSE) of MBIE.

LSE has seven existing branches and is headed by Deputy Secretary Chris Bunney. Chris was Deputy Secretary of MIQ between October 2021 and May 2022.

5.1.2 Decommissioning of Facilities

A total of 29 facilities have been decommissioned and handed back.

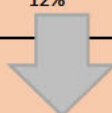
The final three facilities (The Waipuna, Jet Park Auckland and Holiday Inn) closed to guests on 27 June and were handed back on the 29th of July.

Decommissioning of the three regional offices remains on track and will be completed by mid-August.

5.2 Operational Update

5.2.1 Invoicing

The table below shows the number of invoices issued up to 24 July 2022.

INVOICES ISSUED	INVOICES PAID	INVOICES ISSUED - NOT YET DUE	INVOICES OVERDUE	INVOICES WRITTEN OFF
56,901	43,867 (77% of invoices issued)	65 (0.1% of invoices issued)	10,018 (18% of invoices issued)	2951 invoices (5%)
TOTAL VALUE OF INVOICES ISSUED	PAID (BY VALUE)	ISSUED - NOT YET DUE (BY VALUE)	INVOICES OVERDUE (BY VALUE)	INVOICES WRITTEN OFF (BY VALUE)
\$217M	\$181M 83%	\$185K 0.1%	\$25M 12%	\$10.5M 4.8%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There are 11,659 of these unmatched records in the database that need to have their liability determined before invoicing. A project team has been established to investigate the most effective way to invoice the unmatched data. 			 <p>90+ days overdue 5,480 invoices \$16.3M (by value) 7% (by value of all invoices issued)</p>	

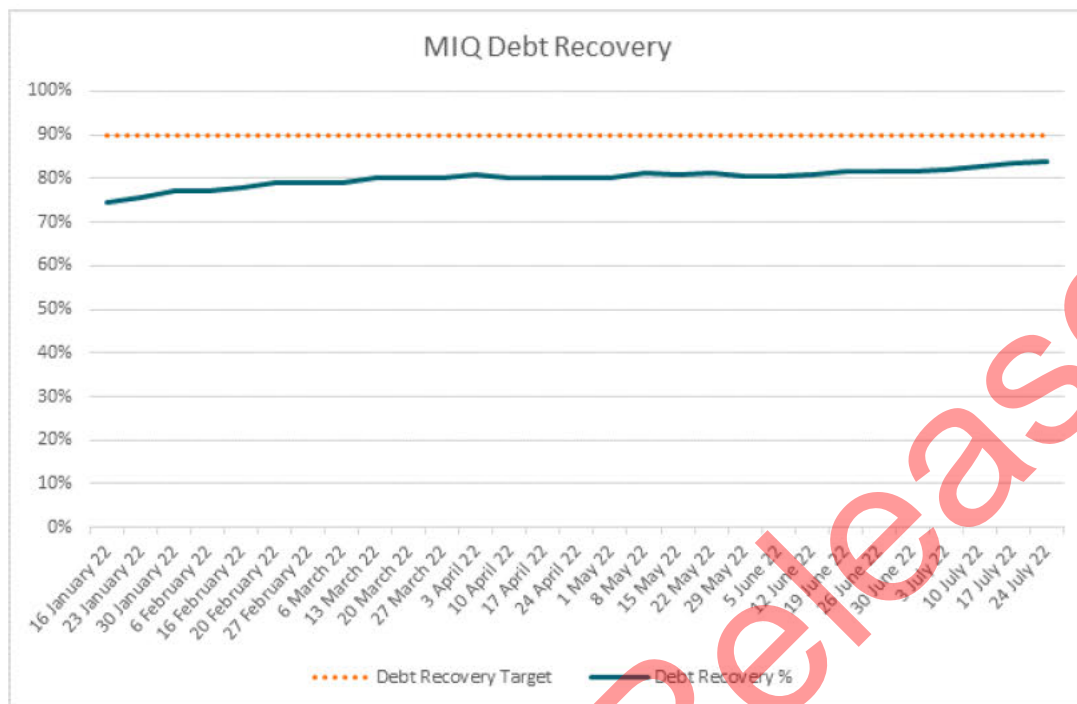
5.2.2 Debt Recovery

The debt recovery percentage remains at 84% (against our nominal target recovery of 90%).

As of 24 July, 14,473 invoices worth \$43m have been passed to our debt partner.

- \$16.7m has now been paid (an increase of \$487k).
- A further \$650k of debt is under instalment and is expected to be converted to payments over coming weeks.
- Of the invoices sent, 539 customers worth \$1.2m have now submitted waiver applications. While applications are processed, they are recorded as outstanding debt.

The following chart shows the weekly MIQ debt recovery percentage since 9 January compared against MBIE's nominal recovery target.



5.2.3 Fee Waivers

The table below breaks down the waiver application information between 11 August 2020 and 17 July 2022. The numbers below relate to all waiver applications; waivers can be applied for before, during and after an individual has stayed in managed isolation.

All Waiver Applications Received	Received and not progressed	Total Completed	Approved Waiver Applications			Declined Waiver Applications		
			Financial Hardship	Special Circumstances	BOTH	Financial Hardship	Special Circumstances	BOTH
19,355	3,417	15,620	103	9,966	118	2,051	2,847	535
			Overall Approved 66.5% (of completed applications)			Overall Declined 33.5% (of completed applications)		

5.2.4 Reducing the Fee Waiver backlog

The table below shows the total number of backlogs for Fee Waivers, comparing numbers from the current week with the week prior.

	Fee Waiver Backlog as at 17 July 2022	Fee Waiver Backlog as at 10 July 2022
Total Fee Waiver backlog	381	381
Fee Waiver processing or to be processed	227	319
Waiting for customer	91	62

5.3 Ombudsman Complaints

As at 25 July there are 10 active investigations:

- one is on policy advice;

- four are on emergency allocations;
- two are on exemptions from managed isolation;
- one relates to a declined fee waiver;
- one is about facilities; and
- one is the Chief Ombudsman's self-initiated investigation.

To date, 192 investigations have been closed, with the Chief Ombudsman issuing 82 opinions in MBIE's favour and 8 final opinions against MBIE.

There are 65 preliminary enquiries. Preliminary enquiries are cases where the Ombudsman requests the file to assess the complaint and determine next steps.

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6. Border Executive Board Report

6.1 Items to Note/Update

6.1.1 Border Executive Board Meeting

The Board met on 27 July 2022.

s9(2)(f)(iv)

[Redacted content]

Foot and Mouth Disease

The Board received an update from the Ministry for Primary Industries on the status of the risk of foot and mouth disease entering New Zealand and the impact on border processing. This reflects the close geographic proximity of Indonesia to Australia and the high volume of trans-Tasman travel. It was noted that one of the greatest risks is via meat products being brought into the country. The Border Executive Board Secretariat will work with the Ministry for Primary Industries to coordinate advice to the Board about how all agencies at the border can support the Ministry for Primary Industries to scale its response to foot and mouth disease within the week.

Maritime pathway operational readiness

The Board received its final detailed readiness dashboard to reopen the maritime pathway to foreign flagged vessels and cruise from 11.59pm, 31 July 2022. The border will successfully reopen. s9(2)(f)(iv)

The Board noted work also continues to support the reopening of the main cruise season in spring/summer. The Board will receive regular updates on the Maritime Border Programme ahead of the main cruise season beginning.

New Zealand Traveller Declaration options

s9(2)(f)(iv)

[Redacted content]

s9(2)(f)(iv)

[REDACTED]

Reconnecting New Zealanders Air Border Implementation readiness for Step 5

The Board received assurance that work is on-track to successfully implement the final step of the Reconnecting New Zealanders Programme. There are no issues expected with the go-live of Step 5, however, the impact of visa applications will not be immediately known due to the 20-working day processing period. The volume of visa applications is unknown but expected to be high.

The next meeting is scheduled for 4 August 2022.

6.1.2 Maritime Border Programme update

The Maritime Border Programme has moved to amber status

The Programme status has moved to amber s9(2)(f)(iv)

Operational Readiness

Agencies are ready for the reopening of the maritime border to foreign flagged vessels and cruise from 11:59pm 31 July 2022, with work underway to ensure readiness for the cruise season. Officials are planning for a range of scenarios due to the changing nature of the Omicron outbreak and COVID-19 border settings. Weekly engagement with the cruise industry is ongoing, with operational guidance to be provided this week.

Regulatory settings

The Director-General of Health has signed an exemption for ships liable to quarantine to provide a clear legal authority for pratique to be granted where COVID-19 exists on a ship. This will avoid the situation where pratique must be withheld even if it is safe for the ship to berth and disembark. The Director-General of Health has also issued Notices relating to the maritime border: specifying the form and content of notice of arrival for ships; COVID-19 vaccines; and evidence of vaccination.


Communications

A public announcement on the reopening of the maritime border to passenger vessels will be included in a wider announcement on changing border settings by the Ministers of Immigration and Tourism. There will not be a public communications campaign around the reopening of the Maritime border, however the Unite Against Covid-19 website and other industry specific communications channels are on track to provide advice and guidance.

s9(2)(f)(iv)

[REDACTED]

s9(2)(f)(iv)



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7. New Zealand Customs Service Weekly Report

7.1 Items to Note/Updates

7.1.1 New Zealand Traveller Declaration System – engagement with Indian tourism industry

Since 2020, Tourism New Zealand has run a series of webinars called New Zealand Virtual Road Trip targeted at the travel sector. To support the reopening of the New Zealand border, the webinar theme for this month is Reconnecting New Zealand.

On 27 July 2022, the New Zealand Traveller Declaration Programme, alongside the Ministry for Primary Industries, was invited to present at a webinar to over 500 travel agents based in India. Customs gave an overview of the New Zealand Traveller Declaration and biosecurity requirements to enter into New Zealand.

According to Tourism New Zealand, approximately 85 per cent of visitors travelling from India engage with a travel agent when travelling to New Zealand so this was a fantastic opportunity to raise awareness of the New Zealand Traveller Declaration within the travel sector.

7.1.2 Compliance Checking at the Air Border

This information will now be reported monthly with the next update on 5 August 2022.

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8. Covid-19 Chief Executives Board

8.1 Items to Note/Updates

The COVID-19 Chief Executives Board (CCB) met on Tuesday 26 July. Topics included a general update on the COVID-19 response including Health, social aspects, the border, and MIQ. Assurance of readiness measures for a new variant of concern were discussed, as well as work underway for a shift to s9(2)(f)(iv)

An update on DPMC COVID-19 Group transition work was provided as well as a discussion of key themes which have been raised through multiple reviews.

9. Strategic COVID-19 Public Health Advisory Group

9.1 Items to Note/Updates

The Strategic COVID-19 Public Health Advisory Group met on Wednesday 27 July. The Group received an update on current modelling from DPMC and discussed their interest in seeing modelling being used to explore key interventions. The Group also discussed the Waikato Omicron Audit Final report provided by the Ministry of Health, and more broadly, what regular reporting they would like to receive, and progress being made on mortality risk data. The Group plan to meet in a fortnight and the secretariat we are working with your office to confirm your availability.

10. Upcoming Cabinet Papers

s9(2)(f)(iv)



Proactively Released

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