



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



BORDER EXECUTIVE BOARD



NEW ZEALAND
FOREIGN AFFAIRS & TRADE
MANATŪ AORERE



COVID-19 Response Weekly Report




8 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

	Agency	Last Week → This Week		Agency Comment
International Connections	Te Whatu Ora			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> HNZ is supporting the Ministry of Health with preparing the Transition Plan: On-arrival Testing at the Air Border Briefing, which is scheduled to be provided to Ministers on 8 July for consideration. This advice will include how on-arrival testing fits into the broader surveillance approach, how and when on-arrival testing could be strengthened in response to risk, and the legal mechanisms for on-arrival testing outside emergency powers. A current focus is engaging with the cruise industry in the lead up to the opening of ports to foreign flagged vessels from 31 July. Following the amendments to various COVID-19 Orders from 2 July, only specified workers in the health and disability sector are required to be vaccinated and get a booster dose. Vaccination requirements no longer apply to border workers, corrections workers, and the remaining groups of workers.
	BEB			<p><i>Air border implementation</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> There has been a significant lift in passenger numbers since pre-departure testing has been removed which is expected to continue through the New Zealand school holidays. Private flights are also increasing. As of 4 July 2022, applications opened for all work visas including the Accredited Employer Work Visa (AEWV). Partners and dependent children of work visa applicants can also apply for a visa. Processing time for these visas is 20 working days from lodgement so there will be a delay before there is an impact on the border. Readiness for Step 5 is on track and will be reported to the Border Executive Board.
	BEB			<p><i>Maritime border programme</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Agency feedback on the draft Maritime Border Order is being collated and a final order will be provided to you on 11 July 2022. Operational readiness to reopen the maritime border from 31 July 2022 remains on track with cruise industry engagement on the compliance approach underway. Communications planning is on track to support messaging on the changes to the Maritime Border Order and compliance requirements for 31 July 2022. s9(2)(f)(iv)
Pacific Travel	MFAT			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Aotearoa New Zealand has sent a medical team and supplies to Niue to help it respond to new cases of COVID-19, following the opening of its border to quarantine-free travel last week. The team includes doctors, nurses and logistics personnel (including NZDF logistics), to directly support the Niuean Government's response. Personal protective equipment (PPE) and additional rapid antigen tests have also been supplied to supplement Niue's existing stores. Solomon Islands, Vanuatu and Kiribati have reopened borders to international travellers from 1 July. Entry conditions remain, including vaccination requirements and proof of negative tests or recent recovery from Covid (exact requirements differ between countries). Tokelau's public health team is preparing advice for Tokelau's Council on options for safely reopening Tokelau's borders to enable the resumption of essential worker access and the repatriation of patients stranded in New Zealand.

Isolation and Quarantine

Agency	Last Week	This Week	Agency Comment
Managed Isolation MBIE	●	●	<p><i>Decommissioning of Facilities</i></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 decommissioned on 5 August. Decommissioning of the three regional offices is now also underway and on track to be completed by mid-August. <p><i>MIQ Readiness Programme</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> MBIE remains on track to deliver Version 2 of the Readiness Plan by 29 July 2022.

*No update was received on Self-isolation from Te Whatu Ora.

Community Protection

Agency	Last Week	This Week	Agency Comment
Surveillance and Testing Te Whatu Ora	●	●	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> On 5 July, 3,790 PCR tests were processed, with a total of 22,410 tests completed over the last seven days before 29 June. The rolling seven-day average is 3,201. Currently, 95.5% of PCRs have a turnaround time under 24 hours. As part of surveillance activity, HNZ is closely monitoring the Whole Genome Sequencing (WGS) process for positive PCR samples across the border, hospitals and the community.
Care in the Community Te Whatu Ora	●	●	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The COVID-19 Care in the Community Operational team completed site visits to 53 Care Coordination Hubs throughout the Country. The visits enabled the team to determine what has worked and what needs development. Notable highlights from the visits include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The visit to the Pacific Regional Coordination Hub (PaRCH) was one of the trips highlights, as the team discussed Pasifika outreach and how their COVID-19 Care in the Community team has made contact, worked and engaged with 5,000 non-enrolled Pasifika patients. The team at Northern Regional Hub advised that the co-location of the Ministry of Social Development community connectors at the Care Coordination Hubs, has enabled fast and responsive service provision for manaaki, welfare and clinical patient requirements.

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

Vaccination

Agency	Last Week	This Week	Agency Comment
Implementation and operation Te Whatu Ora	●	●	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As at 11.59pm 5 July, 7,718 second booster doses have been administered, with a further 13,455 bookings made in BookMyVaccine for second boosters. Uptake of first boosters remains stable, with 5,656 first boosters administered in the week ending 5 July. The launch of second boosters has seen an increase in vaccination numbers, with approximately 1.0M people becoming eligible for a second booster by the end of July. Novavax has been enabled as a first booster without the need for a prescription from 5 July. BookMyVaccine has been updated to ensure consumers can book Novavax booster appointments. As at 30 June 22, the vaccination rate for those aged 12 years and over supported by Disability Support Services (DSS) funding remains at 90%. Booster uptake among this cohort is now at 78%. 27% of children aged 5-11 years who are supported by DSS funding are fully vaccinated and a further 25% are partially vaccinated. 86% of mental health and Alcohol and Other Drug (AOD) service users aged 12 years and over are fully vaccinated. First booster uptake among this cohort for those eligible is at 57%.

System Readiness & Planning

		Agency	Last Week	→ This Week	Agency Comment on Status of Focus Area
Planning for Next Phase	Health Supply Chain	Te Whatu Ora	●	●	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Overall supply and distribution of RATs is very steady, with good volumes of RATs in stock and being distributed. Existing stock volumes are surge ready. For the week ending 30 June, HNZ had 49.1M RATs in stock on hand, representing 51 weeks supply at current demand and 5 weeks supply at Omicron peak demand levels (NB: dispatch during Omicron peak does not reflect predicted levels during future waves, as there are now good levels of stock in the community). 41.8M RATs are on order to 30 September. Approximately 0.1M RATs were sent from the warehouse in the last six days to 30 June. There were 22K orders placed in the RAT Requestor system (representing 78K people). There were 38 delivery orders for those unable to collect RATs (covering 81 people), including Targeted Rural Service, immunocompromised, aged, and disability sectors. As of 30 June, Healthpoint shows 510 sites offering RATs collection and/or testing. This includes 353 community collection sites, 91 Community Testing Centres, and 107 providers supporting priority population groups. 19 RAT devices are now authorised by the Ministry of Health, plus five rapid molecular/NAAT POC (1 self-test) devices. In total, on 6 July, 20 POCT applications are open.
		DPMC	●	●	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> DPMC have started work on a thematic analysis of cross agency coordination in preparation for the transition of the COVID-19 Group's Readiness and Response function to Health New Zealand. A paper on system readiness activities is going to the CCB outlining proposed workstreams. 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.
	System Readiness	Te Whatu Ora	●	●	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ongoing work is underway to understand the implications of the Variants of Concern papers S9(2)(f)(iv) [REDACTED] Following the release of version 2 of the Risk Score for Call Prioritization (Risk Score), the COVID-19 Care in the Community Change Management Team has scheduled regular calls with the sector to promote the tool.
		DPMC	●	●	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The National Management Approach Q2 has been released and distributed. Commissioning of the planning for the Q3 National Management Plan has been done and initial working group notification has been made.
		Te Whatu Ora	●	●	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It was announced on 30 June that New Zealand will remain at the Orange traffic light setting under the COVID-19 Protection Framework (CPF). The next COVID-19 Assessment Committee meeting to review the traffic light settings of the CPF is scheduled to take place on 15 July. Also announced on 30 June was the updated reinfection guidance for anyone experiencing new COVID-19 symptoms. Those experiencing new COVID-19 symptoms 29 days or more following their initial infection should get a test.

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

2.1 COVID-19 and the Ongoing Impacts on Education

Key points

- COVID-19, COVID-19 health-related lockdowns, winter illness, and supply of teaching staff are among other drivers that have disrupted New Zealand's schooling system impacting student welfare and educational outcomes. Students have reported various impacts including higher levels of anxiety, decreased attendance, and that learning from home has been less effective.
- There has been lower educational attainment across all NCEA (National Certificates of Educational Achievement) levels in 2021 compared to 2020, but attainment is similar to 2019 levels. The decrease between 2020 and 2021 was more prominent for Māori and Pasifika students.
- Due to the impact of COVID-19, modifications were introduced to the NCEA system to offset the disruption to education in 2020 and 2021. In 2021 this support was focused on the regions most impacted by COVID-19, with less modifications applied for other regions.
- Winter illness and COVID-19 have caused more students and teachers to be absent from school. Māori and Pasifika students, and students located in the Auckland region appear to have been impacted more. Teacher absenteeism from COVID-19 and winter illness this year, is already approximately double that of the same period in 2019.
- Many schools are reporting a growing difficulty in finding enough teachers. There are currently not enough teachers available to fill positions as there has been an increase in departures from the profession, and there is a lack of teachers currently enrolled in training to fill future gaps.
- COVID-19 is expected to continue to impact student welfare and educational attainment going forward with additional COVID-19 waves. It is likely that the impact COVID-19 has had on attendance, engagement, and missed learning will have medium to long term impact on student learning outcomes.

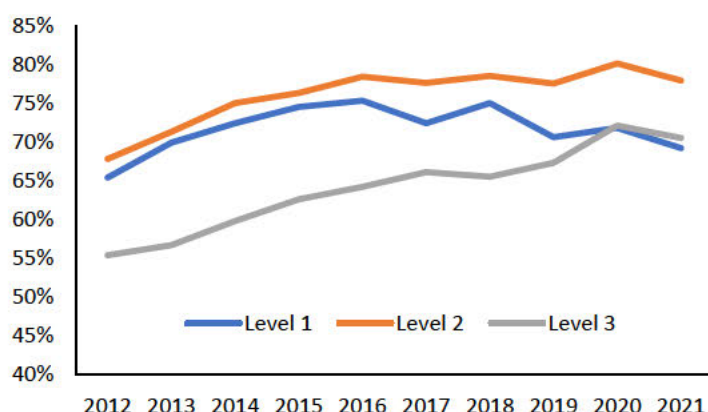
COVID-19's impact on student welfare and educational outcomes

1. **The COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted nearly all aspects of life, and education is no exception.** Significant disruption to the educational system has occurred throughout New Zealand, in part due to illness, lockdowns, closures of schools in response to COVID-19 cases, border closures impacting teacher supply, and ongoing COVID-19 related uncertainty causing anxiety. The inability for some students to attend school in person, or at all, has impacted educational attainment and student wellbeing.
2. **Student absenteeism has increased due to COVID-19.** COVID-19 and COVID-19 related isolation periods have had an impact on student attendance. Data collected shows that the largest disruption occurred during the Omicron peak in March, with a low of 61.5 percent of students attending school in person.^{1 2 1}
3. **Overall NCEA educational attainment in 2021 was lower than 2020, but similar to, or higher than, 2019, once COVID-19 related adjustments were applied,** with the exception for Year 11 NCEA Level 1, which has been falling over the past few years.³ Figure 1 shows achievement trends since 2012 by NCEA level.^{2 4}

¹ Of students enrolled in responding schools.

² All referenced NCEA Level attainment rates in 2020 and 2021 include COVID-19 disruption modifications.

Figure 1: NCEA educational attainment



4. **Due to the disruption caused by COVID-19 the NCEA (National Certificates of Educational Achievement) qualification and University Entrance rules were changed to recognise its impacts in 2020 and 2021.** Learning Recognition Credits, adjustments to NCEA endorsements, and adjustment to University Entrance were established to recognise the disruption of COVID-19 to help support student educational outcomes. Outside of Auckland, Waikato, and Northland (the most impacted regions), the COVID-19 related modifications for NCEA were lower in 2021 than 2020.⁵
5. **There was a larger number of students absent during NCEA exams due to COVID-19 disruption.**⁶ Less students sat exams in 2021 due to the Delta outbreak in the Auckland region. In Northland, Auckland, and Waikato, 43.2 percent of students did not attend external exams, often opting to utilise the unexpected event grades (UEGs) due to the disruption of COVID-19.⁷ In 2020, 10.7 percent of student did not sit external exams across the same regions.⁸ UEGs use collected evidence to identify if students had met the required standard during the year rather than external exams.⁹ Nationally, 27.3 percent of students were absent for external exams in 2021, this was more absent students compared to the 11.5 percent absent in 2020.¹⁰
6. **Students have reported increased anxiety and disengagement, and there are indications that learning from home has been less effective given educational attainment.**¹¹ Surveys show that students had heightened anxiety due to COVID-19 which has negatively influenced attendance.¹² Secondary school learners were indicated that they were feeling anxious after they returned to the classroom in 2020 and 2021 after COVID-19 lockdowns.¹³ Difficulties with workload were identified when having to learn from home.¹⁴
7. **Māori and Pasifika learners and their families have been disproportionately affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.** Pasifika learners' achievement declined in 2021 after a rise in 2020.¹⁵ The largest fall in any given year was seen in Māori and Pasifika students with a four and six percent drop respectively seen for achievement of NCEA Level Two.^{3 16} This fall was more pronounced for Pasifika learners than the general population and Pasifika learners continue to sit below the general population for achievement at NCEA Levels 1, 2, and 3, and University Entrance.¹⁷
8. **The impacts of lockdowns and distance learning on student engagement and achievement had a larger impact on those attending low decile schools, of which the majority are Māori and Pasifika students.** Māori and Pasifika students are overrepresented in low decile schools, with the two groups making up the largest proportion of students attending schools in deciles one through three.¹⁸ Low decile schools saw a greater decrease than high deciles in educational attainment across NCEA Levels One and Two.^{4 19} Survey data from the 2020 lockdown provides evidence that students from low decile schools faced greater challenges from school closures and disruptions caused by COVID-19.²⁰

³ For students sitting NCEA Level Two in Year 12.

⁴ For students sitting NCEA Level One in Year 11 and NCEA Level Two in Year 12.

COVID-19's impact on teaching staff

9. **Schools around the country have been cancelling classes because of a surge of COVID-19 and winter illnesses among staff.**²¹ The use of sick leave is well above historical levels. In the period of January 1 to May 31 2022, over 183,000 days of paid sick leave were paid out to regular teachers.^{5 22 23} This is almost double the rates from pre-COVID-19 (approximately 95,000 days over the same period in 2019).^{24 25} Teachers are absent due to reasons such as COVID-19, winter illnesses, isolation, and taking care of their sick children.²⁶ Schools have reported increased difficulty in getting relief teachers, resulting in some classes needing to be combined, or the reinstating of distance learning.²⁷ Some schools have reported well over their relief teacher budget only halfway through the year.²⁸ However, at a national level there has not been a corresponding increase in the use of relief teachers.²⁹ It is possible that this is due to a pre-existing limited supply of relief staff.³⁰ As a result, schools are having to use unconventional arrangements such as principals teaching and staff backfilling to make up the shortfall.³¹
10. **Teachers' and principals' wellbeing has declined.**³² Teacher and principal wellbeing is being impacted by COVID-19 across the country. Data shows teachers and principals' enjoyment of work has declined, and they are reporting feeling less supported and connected.³³ In particular, principals in smaller schools, and new teachers are reporting difficulties.³⁴ Workload has been an increasing concern both during lockdown distance learning and returning to onsite learning, and principals have indicated that they remain concerned about staffing in 2022.³⁵
11. **There are ongoing pressures in recruiting new teaching staff.** Long term structural challenges in attracting and retaining teachers existed before COVID-19 but have been exacerbated. Teachers are starting to leave their jobs to go overseas but the traditional supply of overseas teachers has not yet resumed.³⁶ A border exception had allowed 300 foreign school and early childhood teachers into the country since August 2021, and the border will reopen fully to foreign teachers in July.³⁷ Domestically, the number of teachers graduating from teacher education last year did not meet the number of vacant positions, and 2023 will have even fewer graduates as enrolments decreased in 2020.³⁸
12. **It is possible that teachers may be more vulnerable to COVID-19 due to higher exposure.** Teaching is potentially becoming a high-risk occupation for COVID-19 infection. Schools notified the Ministry of Education of about 1,000 cases among their teaching staff in the last two weeks of May. Data analyst David Hood calculated that based on this, the weekly infection rate for teachers was around 16 to 17 cases per 1,000 per week, compared to around 11 per 1,000 per week for 20–59-year-olds in the general population.³⁹ Teachers may be more likely to be exposed to the virus than some other workers because they interact with a lot more people each day.⁴⁰

COVID-19 and education going forward

13. **COVID-19 is likely to continue to disrupt school operations.** It is likely that the impact COVID-19 has had on attendance, engagement and missed learning will have medium to long term impacts on student outcomes. However, the nature of this impact may change as teachers and students adjust to online learning. It is likely that hybrid learning (in the classroom and online) will be widespread, staff absences will increase, and there will be ongoing challenges with student engagement, attendance, and learning. New teaching practices may help to meet some of these challenges such as preparing for hybrid learning, having a plan to support re-engagement, and supporting student wellbeing.⁴¹

Thank you to the following teams which contributed to this insight: Ministry of Education and the Education Review Office.

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

⁵ Sick leave includes both COVID-19 related illness and other reasons.

3. Ministry of Health

3.1 Policy/Programme Updates

3.1.1 COVID-19 Research Round

This item updates you on the current COVID-19 research round.

The COVID-19 research round was announced by Minister Little. Manatū Hauora (the Ministry of Health) then launched a \$9 million contestable research fund to address Ministry of Health-identified priority areas and knowledge gaps in the COVID-19 response and COVID-19 vaccination programme. The total research fund includes two tranches with \$4 million from COVID-19 Health System Response and \$5 million from the National Immunisation Programme (NIP). The COVID-19 Health System Response and the NIP have now moved to Te Whatu Ora. However, the execution of this research round will continue to be undertaken jointly by the Ministry of Health and Te Whatu Ora.

As part of this research round, Manatū Hauora are seeking investigator-initiated research projects, findings of which will inform and guide the national COVID-19 immunisation programme to prevent and improve the management of future pandemics. The Ministry of Health will fund projects with terms of up to 12 months up to a maximum value of \$500,000. This is a one-off research round with the request for proposals running from 19 April 2022 to 10 June 2022. The Ministry of Health received 116 registrations of which 75 were submitted as full proposals.

Next steps

The Ministry of Health's evaluation panel will meet on 12 July 2022 to select the top ranked proposals for the Director-General to consider. Successful applicants will be announced from August 2022 and Manatū Hauora will discuss with your office the approach to making the announcements.

3.1.2 Technical Advisory Group: update

COVID-19 TAG

The COVID-19 Technical Advisory Group (COVID-19 TAG) did not meet this week, with the next meeting scheduled for 15 July 2022.

CV TAG

The COVID-19 Vaccine Technical Advisory Group (CV TAG) did not meet this week with the next meeting scheduled for 19 July 2022.

Therapeutics TAG

The COVID-19 Therapeutics Technical Advisory Group (Therapeutics TAG) did not meet in the week with the next meeting scheduled for 8 July 2022.

CT TAG

The COVID-19 Testing Technical Advisory Group (CT TAG) did not meet this week, with the next meeting scheduled for 12 July 2022.

3.1.3 Communications Issues and Activities

As at 28 June 2022

Date	Activity	Lead agency	Comms material	Ministerial Involvement
Mid-week commencing 11 July 2022	Review of CPF.	MoH	TBC – most likely press conference if significant updates.	Minister Verrall

Date	Activity	Lead agency	Comms material	Ministerial Involvement
Week commencing 11 July 2022	Update to maritime border order – signing and gazetting due 11 July.	MoH	Press release and reactives.	Minister Verrall
Ongoing	Face mask compliance - Communications plan underway to highlight opportunities to push messaging on proper mask wearing to include distribution of masks for priority populations distribution of masks with rapid antigen tests encouraging mask use in schools.	MoH	Communications plan.	TBC

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4. Managed Isolation and Quarantine Weekly Report

4.1 Transition and Readiness

4.1.1 Workforce

The formal change process for the remaining facilities, and regional and national offices is on-going. The decision for the new operating model was announced on June 15 and following the expression of interest process, people will be appointed into positions by mid-July with the new operating model in place by 01 August.

Following the decision to bring forward the closure date of the remaining MIQ facilities in Auckland and Christchurch, MIQ will commence consultation with staff to bring forward their last working day and pay in lieu of notice. Consultation will commence the week of the 11th of July.

4.1.2 Decommissioning of Facilities

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

The final three in-use facilities (The Waipuna, Jet Park Auckland and Holiday Inn) closed to guests on 27 June and will be decommissioned on 5 August.

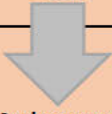
Decommissioning of the three regional offices is also underway and on track, as follows:

- Central office on 31 July;
- Auckland office on 12 August; and
- Christchurch office on 15 August.

4.2 Operational Update

4.2.1 Invoicing

The table below shows the number of invoices issued up to 3 July 2022.

INVOICES ISSUED	INVOICES PAID	INVOICES ISSUED - NOT YET DUE	INVOICES OVERDUE
57,293	42,536 (80% of invoices issued)	1,384 (2% of invoices issued)	10,422 (18% of invoices issued)
TOTAL VALUE OF INVOICES ISSUED	PAID (BY VALUE)	ISSUED - NOT YET DUE (BY VALUE)	INVOICES OVERDUE (BY VALUE)
\$218M	\$178M 79%	\$596k 1%	\$28.8M 13%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Automated and manual invoice batches are up to date. MBIE are working through the ad hoc invoices. With invoicing up to date, MBIE are investigating the 'unmatched data' for the period 25 March 2021 to 28 February 2022 to determine their liability. There are 11,659 of these unmatched records in the database that need to have their liability determined before invoicing. 			 90+ days overdue 4,847 invoices \$15.2M (by value) 7% (by value of all invoices issued)

4.2.2 Debt Recovery

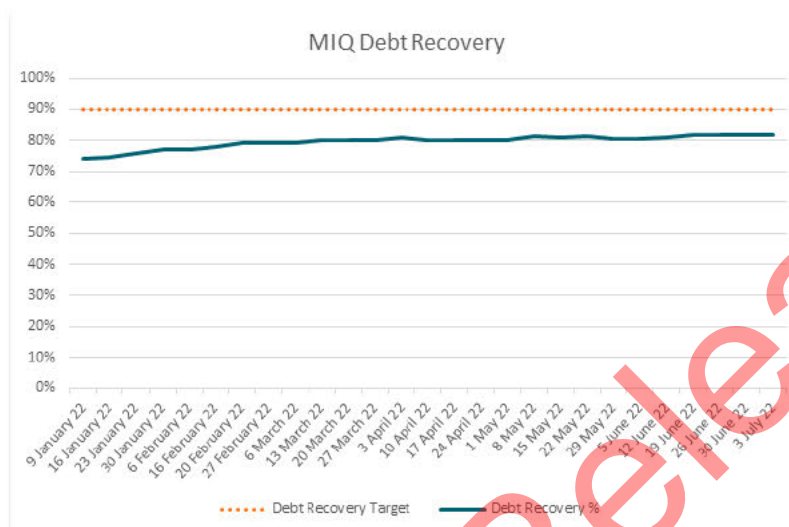
The debt recovery percentage remains at 82 percent (against MBIE's nominal target recovery of 90 percent).

As of 3 July, 12,697 invoices worth \$39.9m have been passed to MBIE's debt partner.

- \$15.1m has now been paid (an increase of \$680k).

- A further \$631k of debt is under instalment and is expected to be converted to payments over coming weeks.
- Of the invoices sent, 442 customers worth \$1m 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.



4.2.3 Fee Waivers

The table below breaks down the waiver application information between 11 August 2020 and 3 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
19,113	3,393	15,335	103	9,772	114	2,009	2,818	519
			Overall Approved 66.5% (of completed applications)			Overall Declined 33.5% (of completed applications)		

4.2.4 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 3 July 2022	Fee Waiver Backlog as at 26 June 2022
Total Fee Waiver backlog	379	449
Fee Waiver processing or to be processed	289	267
Waiting for customer	90	182

4.3 Ombudsman Complaints

There are 11 active investigations:

- one is on policy advice;
- four are on emergency allocations;

- two are on exemptions from managed isolation;
- two relate to declined fee waiver decisions;
- one is about facilities; and
- one is the Chief Ombudsman's self-initiated investigation.

There are 67 preliminary enquiries. Preliminary enquiries are cases where the Ombudsman requests the file to assess the complaint and determine next steps.

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5. Border Executive Board Report

5.1 Items to Note/Update

5.1.1 Border Executive Board Meeting

The next Board meeting is 13 July 2022. You have expressed an interest in attending the Board meeting on 13 July 2022 and we are confirming arrangements with your office.

5.1.2 Reconnecting New Zealanders Programme

The penultimate step (Step 4) of the Reconnecting New Zealanders Programme was completed on 4 July 2022 with applications opening for all work visas, including the Accredited Employer Work Visa (AEWV) to vaccinated travellers.

As of 6 July 2022, applications have been slow to come in, however Visa processing offices are expecting application numbers to peak in October and November 2022 at about 8,500 per month. Work visa processing time is 20 working days so there will be a delay before there is an impact on border flows.

Step 5, from 11.59 pm on 31 July 2022, opening up all visa application categories including tourist, visitor and student visas from travellers anywhere in the world, is expected to generate a substantial increase in applications. The Reconnecting New Zealanders programme is considered completed with the implementation of Step 5.

6. New Zealand Customs Service Weekly Report

6.1 Items to Note/Updates

6.1.1 Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade Committee: 2022//23 Estimates post-hearing NZTD question

On 23 June 2022, the Minister for Customs attended the Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade Committee hearing relating to its examination of the Vote Customs 2022/23 Estimates of Appropriations. The Minister has received post-hearing questions.

Of the four questions tabled, one question relates to the New Zealand Traveller Declaration system and its appropriation, for which you as the Minister for COVID-19 Response are the responsible Minister. Customs will draft the response to this question and submit it for your approval. The responses to the post-hearing questions are due from the Minister for Customs to the Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade Committee by 4.00pm on 18 July 2022 and so your approval is asked for by 12 noon on 18 July 2022.

The remaining three questions relate to Vote Customs appropriations for which the Minister for Customs is responsible.

6.1.2 Compliance Checking at the Air Border

Customs staff continue to undertake compliance checks for all passengers on arrival for evidence of vaccination verification or exemption stemming from the COVID-19 Public Health Response (Air Border) Order 2021. This information will now be reported monthly with the next update in August 2022.

6.1.3 Return of foreign vessels

The first full cruise ship is set to arrive into New Zealand on 4 October 2022 arriving into Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland. A cruise ship operator has signalled that there may be a promotional cruise with skeleton staff and passengers to arrive in Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland on 12 August 2022, but this is still awaiting industry confirmation.

Customs continues to work with the Ministry of Transport, Maritime New Zealand, Health New Zealand, other key agencies and the industry on operational requirements and readiness to manage the return of cruise vessels once the border reopens for all foreign flagged vessels.

s9(2)(f)(iv)

It is expected that small craft arrival numbers will increase and come close to pre-COVID-19 numbers once the foreign flagged vessel ban is lifted from 31 July 2022.

The Maritime team will retain operational readiness for small craft and is currently consulting on how to reopen small craft arrival ports after the directive to arrive in Opua was put in place during COVID-19.

6.1.4 New Zealand Traveller Declaration system

Changes to Australia's COVID-19 requirements for travellers

On 3 July 2022, the Australian Government announced that from 6 July 2022, people will be able to travel to Australia without being required to declare their COVID-19 vaccination status. Travellers must still comply with any remaining COVID-19 requirements of airlines and shipping operators, as well as other countries and states and territories. In addition, from 6 July 2022, people travelling to Australia will no longer have to complete a Digital Passenger Declaration to declare their COVID-19 vaccination status.

The Digital Passenger Declaration is a similar concept to the New Zealand Traveller Declaration system. The Australian Digital Passenger Declaration was introduced in February 2022 as a requirement for all air travellers arriving in Australia. It is an app which requires travellers to upload their vaccination status ahead of entering

into Australia. Traveller discourse around Digital Passenger Declaration user functionality has been highlighted frequently in Australian media. Australia's Minister for Home Affairs the Hon Clare O'Neill MP said the Digital Passenger Declaration *"needs a lot more work to make it user friendly."*

Although Australia has removed the Digital Passenger Declaration, they have stated their intention that the Digital Passenger Declaration will eventually serve to digitise the paper-based incoming passenger card and visa processing and will ultimately be used across a number of government services.

2022 Te Hāpai Hāpori Spirit of Service Awards

The New Zealand Traveller Declaration has been confirmed as one of five finalists for Te Tohu mō te Ratonga Whakahirahira, Service Excellence Award for the 2022 Te Hāpai Hāpori Spirit of Service Awards. This award celebrates leading-edge service improvements that are making a real difference to the lives of New Zealanders. Customs has been invited to prepare a short presentation for judging on 21 July 2022.

The Awards are awarded annually by the Te Kawa Mataaho Public Service Commission. They recognise outstanding public sector governance, the work of young leaders, and initiatives that have delivered positive outcomes to the wider community.


7. Advisory Groups, Forums, and Panels

There are no updates from the COVID-19 Chief Executive Board; Strategic COVID-19 Public Health Advisory Group; Business Leaders Forum; or Community Panel this week.

Proactively Released

8. Upcoming Cabinet Papers

s9(2)(f)(iv)



Proactively Released

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