



Aide-Memoire

RECONNECTING NEW ZEALANDERS READINESS FOR STEP 2

To	Rt Hon. Jacinda Ardern, Prime Minister Hon. Chris Hipkins, Minister for COVID-19 Response	Report No	DPMC-2021/22-1594
From	Cheryl Barnes, DCE, COVID-19 Group, DPMC	Date	4/03/2022

Purpose

1. This Aide-Memoire provides an update on the status of system readiness to go live with the next steps of Reconnecting New Zealanders.

Background

2. On 03 February, Ministers announced the steps for Reconnecting New Zealanders starting with Step 1 – New Zealanders and other eligible travellers (under New Zealand’s existing border settings) from Australia at 11.59pm on Sunday 27 February. Step 1 opened as planned with the first travellers arriving in New Zealand on 28 February.
3. On 28 February, the Prime Minister announced that from 11.59pm on Wednesday 02 March, self-isolation would no longer be a requirement for travelling to New Zealand. In addition, part of Step 2 was brought forward so from 11.59pm on Friday 04 March New Zealanders and other eligible travellers can travel to New Zealand from anywhere in the world, also with no self-isolation requirements.
4. The remaining aspects of Step 2 will see critical workers, sports / events, some students and existing visa holders travelling to New Zealand from anywhere in the world from 11.59pm on Sunday 13 March.
5. This report highlights updates on the key outstanding issues for the two phases of Step 2 and details being worked on to ensure readiness.
6. Attached to this Aide Memoire is a readiness report dated 04 March 2022. The New Zealand Customs Service, in their role leading Border Implementation, report the status for the Border aspects and the Ministry for Business, Innovation and Employment report on the self-isolation elements.

Comment

7. This report has an overall Green rating. There are no critical issues that will cause a delay to the initial phase of Step 2 that comes into effect this evening.
8. The following key actions are outstanding:
 - a. Guidance and FAQs for the aviation sector are being updated based on the revised Director-General notices signed yesterday;
 - b. Public-facing information is being updated on websites across government;
 - c. Release of those eligible from MIQ on Saturday morning.
9. Although few of these actions are complete, work is well underway and **officials across agencies are reporting that they are confident that the changes needed will be in place by Friday evening.**
10. We are still working through the key challenges identified earlier in the week:
 - a. **Eligible travellers with New Zealand citizens** - there is no systemic way to identify Australian nationals that are eligible to travel to NZ as a partner or family member of a New Zealander^[1]. Checks to confirm eligibility are undertaken manually at the airport check in via calls to Immigration's Border Operations (IBO) 24/7 support line and are causing delays to departures due to the numbers (40-50 passengers per flight). This is a significant challenge for airlines and airports. Immigration New Zealand have devolved boarding decisions to the Airline Liaison Officers (ILOs) on the ground. This will reduce the number of calls to IBO and help to prevent delays. Impacts are being assessed daily and IBO are working closely with airlines to review and streamline passenger processing. There remain concerns as to the impacts once Step 2.1 comes into play (NZ citizens and eligible family members from anywhere can travel to NZ and not need to self-isolate from 11.59pm 04 March) however IBO has brought forward the deployment of ALOs to key ports in London, Los Angeles, Singapore and Dubai to support the on the ground facilitation of eligible travellers. *Update: The volume of calls coming through the IBO has decreased significantly – Officials will continue to monitor the situation and will identify further mitigations if required.*
 - b. **Nau Mai Rā (NMR) completion rates** - ~10% of travellers are failing to complete NMR, in excess of 30% on some flights. *Update: The root causes appear to be a technical issue meaning some confirmations are not being sent out, and a communication issue where people are not aware of the need. Teams are working through solutions collaboratively with industry.*
 - c. **NEW- Excess baggage** – Airlines are struggling with the volumes of baggage that travellers are travelling with which is causing logistical challenges and delays to flights. This issue needs to be resolved by the sector.
11. Agencies are confident these challenges will not delay step 2.

^[1] This includes:

1. Australian citizens or permanent residence visa holder where NZ is your primary place of residence; and
2. Partner, dependent child, or parent of a dependent child who either:
 - a. holds a visa based on their relationship to an NZ citizen or resident
 - b. is travelling with a New Zealander or resident, or
 - c. is ordinarily resident in NZ.

Recommendations

12. It is recommended that you **note** the contents of this aide-memoire.

Cheryl Barnes
Deputy Chief Executive
COVID-19 Group

Date: 04/03/2022

NOTED	
	Rt Hon. Jacinda Ardern Prime Minister
Date:	/ /

NOTED	
	Hon. Chris Hipkins, Minister for COVID-19 Response
Date:	/ /

Cc: COVID-19 Chief Executives Board (with regular meeting papers), COVID-19 Independent Continuous Review, Improvement and Advice Group

Attachment A Readiness report dated 04 March

Reconnecting New Zealanders Readiness Report for Step 2 – Status as at 04 March 2022

Overall status
GREEN

Ref	Lead agency	Group of activities	Step 1 NZ citizens arriving from Australia no longer need to self-isolate (from 11.59pm 02 March)	Step 2.1 NZ citizens from anywhere can travel to NZ and not need to self-isolate (from 11.59pm 04 March)	Step 2.2 Critical workforces, sports / events, some students, existing visa holders can travel to NZ (from 11.59pm 13 March)
1	MoH	Regulatory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Change ABO/DG Notices ✓ Change IQO 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Change ABO/DG Notices ✓ Update Immigration Regulations ○ Update Safe Travel Advisory 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ≠ Change ABO/DG Notices ≠ Update Immigration Regulations ≠ Update Safe Travel Advisory
2	MoH	Border Health Updates	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Confirm requirements and update Nau Mai Rā ✓ Update testing survey email ✓ Update guidance for returnees ✓ Update MoH website content 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Ensure staffing for Vaccine Pass sufficient to maintain turnaround time to load overseas to the database to be eligible ○ Update welcome packs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ≠ Ensure staffing for Vaccine Pass sufficient to maintain turnaround time to load overseas to the database to be eligible ≠ Update guidance and any relevant exemptions processes ≠ Confirm Nau Mai Rā compliance position due to high numbers failing to complete it currently (ongoing issue)
3	Customs	Border Agencies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Update FAQ for staff working at the border 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Additional staff to cope with volumes at the border (Customs, INZ, MPI, Health) ○ Revise processes for data matching ○ Update SOP's and processes ○ Update staff training 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Review Staffing ○ Update SOP's and processes ○ Update staff training
4	Customs	Aviation sector	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Update airport signage ✓ Update FAQ for aviation sector ✓ Update sector advice/ websites ✓ Update script for airlines to use on flights 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Update FAQ for aviation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Update FAQ for aviation ○ Update sector advice/ websites ○ Mobilise Queenstown and Wellington operational support (dates TBC)
5	MBIE	ALOs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Update training for offshore airports 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Update Training for Offshore airports 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Update Training for Offshore airports
6	DPMC	Communications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Update websites across government 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Update websites across government ○ Update sector advice/ websites 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ≠ Update websites across government ≠ Update sector advice/ websites
7	MBIE	Removing self-isolation/ any MIQ changes		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Send communications to those in MIQ ✓ Confirm changes to MIQ processes including booking system, emergency allocations etc to be announced and website updated ✓ Engage with existing returnees about vaccination status and potential early release ✓ Provide update to voucher holders ✓ Engage with workforce, suppliers, partners and stakeholders ○ Release of eligible MIQ travellers/ Transition eligible MIQ returnees onto new testing scheme on release 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Update MIQ website ○ Engage with suppliers, partners and stakeholders

Legend:
 ≠ Not started
 ○ Work in-progress
 ✓ Complete