



COVID-19 Response Weekly Report

17 June 2022

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1. Status Summary

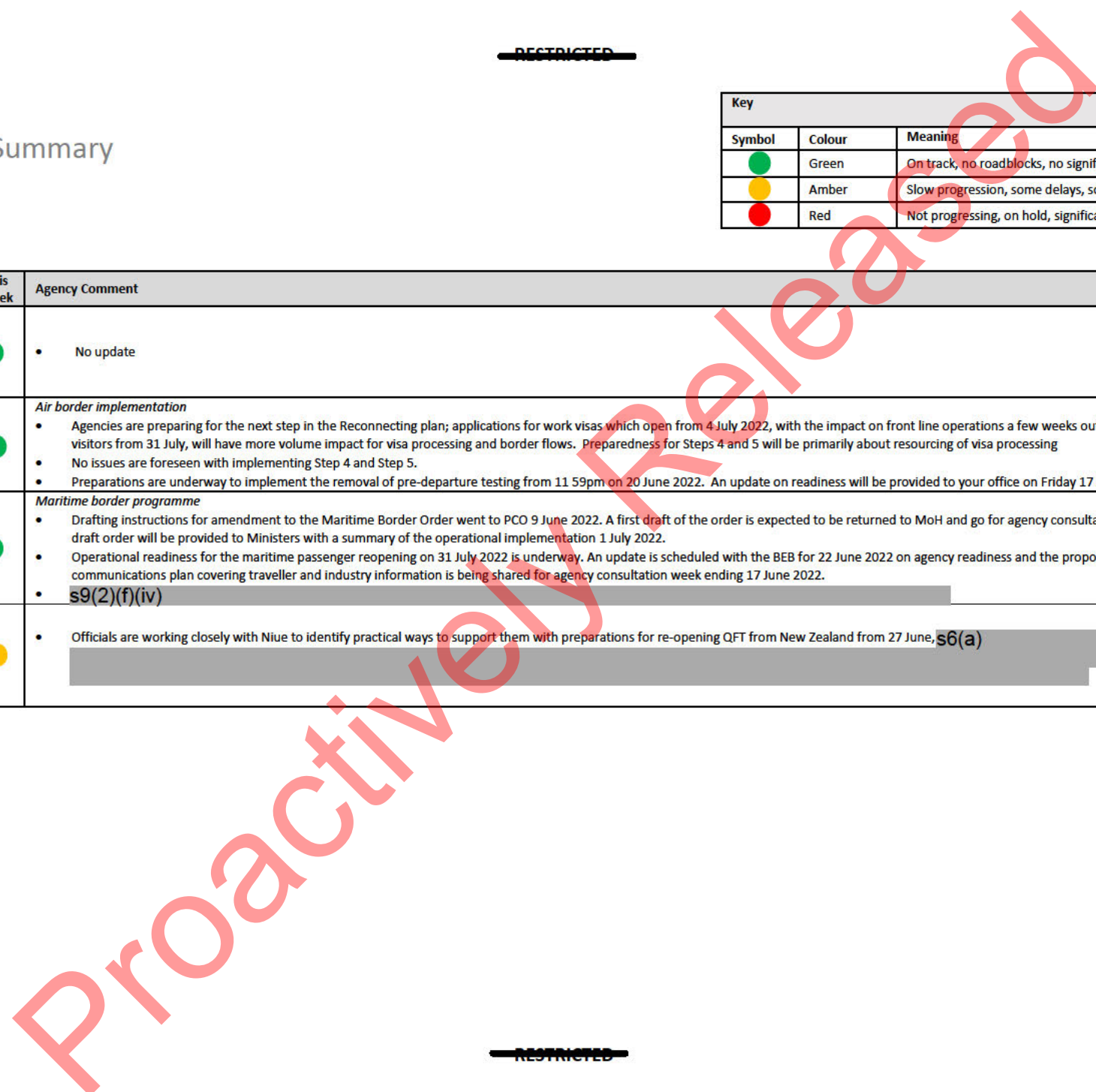
Key		
Symbol	Colour	Meaning
●	Green	On track, no roadblocks, no significant delays anticipated
●	Amber	Slow progression, some delays, some roadblocks present
●	Red	Not progressing, on hold, significant delays

Border

Agency	Last Week	→ This Week	Agency Comment
MOH	●	●	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No update
BEB	●	●	<p><i>Air border implementation</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Agencies are preparing for the next step in the Reconnecting plan; applications for work visas which open from 4 July 2022, with the impact on front line operations a few weeks out. Step 5, opening visa applications to visitors from 31 July, will have more volume impact for visa processing and border flows. Preparedness for Steps 4 and 5 will be primarily about resourcing of visa processing No issues are foreseen with implementing Step 4 and Step 5. Preparations are underway to implement the removal of pre-departure testing from 11 59pm on 20 June 2022. An update on readiness will be provided to your office on Friday 17 June 2022.
BEB	●	●	<p><i>Maritime border programme</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Drafting instructions for amendment to the Maritime Border Order went to PCO 9 June 2022. A first draft of the order is expected to be returned to MoH and go for agency consultation week starting 20 June 2022. A draft order will be provided to Ministers with a summary of the operational implementation 1 July 2022. Operational readiness for the maritime passenger reopening on 31 July 2022 is underway. An update is scheduled with the BEB for 22 June 2022 on agency readiness and the proposed compliance approach. A communications plan covering traveller and industry information is being shared for agency consultation week ending 17 June 2022. s9(2)(f)(iv)
MFAT	●	●	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Officials are working closely with Niue to identify practical ways to support them with preparations for re-opening QFT from New Zealand from 27 June, s6(a)

Reconnecting New Zealanders

Pacific Travel



Isolation and Quarantine

Agency	Last Week	This Week	Agency Comment
Managed Isolation MBIE	●	●	Decommissioning of Facilities <ul style="list-style-type: none">To date a total of 26 facilities have been decommissioned and handed back. The 'make good' work on these facilities continues.The Commodore Hotel Christchurch has now been de-designated and will also be decommissioned by the end of June.Decommissioning for the final three currently in-use facilities is on track and they will be deactivated by the end of June, with community cases being supported by the National Alternative Accommodation Service from 1 July.Decommissioning dates for the three regional offices are now confirmed with Central planned for 31 June, Christchurch planned for 15 August and Auckland, 31 August. MIQ Readiness Programme <ul style="list-style-type: none">Version 1 of the Readiness Plan was sent to the Minister of Covid-19 Response on 30 May 2022 and has been finalized following the Ministers feedback.We remain on track to deliver Version 2 of the plan by 29 July 2022.
	Self-Isolation MOH	●	●

Community Protection

There are no updates from MOH on surveillance and testing; contact tracing; technology; and Care in the Community while the COVID-19 Response Directorate from MOH is being transferred to interim Health New Zealand (iHNZ).

Vaccination

There are no updates from MOH on implementation and operation while the COVID-19 Response Directorate from MOH is being transferred to interim Health New Zealand (iHNZ).

System Readiness & Planning

There are no updates from MOH or DPMC on health supply chains; system readiness; and planning for next phase while the COVID-19 Response Directorate from MOH is being transferred to interim Health New Zealand (iHNZ).

Proactively Released

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

2.1 Pressures on New Zealand due to COVID-19 Over Winter

Key points

- New Zealand's elimination strategy minimised the impact of COVID-19 through the 2021 winter season. This winter season will be the first under the Minimise and Protect strategy with Omicron cases circulating in the community. Dry, cold conditions and more time spent indoors mean that respiratory illnesses, including COVID-19, spread more easily over winter.
- Currently hospitalisations due to influenza and other Severe Acute Respiratory Infections (SARIs) are increasing in New Zealand. It is the first time since 2019 that influenza has been the most identified virus among SARI patients. While antiviral treatments and other treatments are more readily available, absences in the workplace are increasing – putting additional strain on the economy.
- The experiences of the United Kingdom (UK) and Ireland – while not perfect comparators – suggests that New Zealand can anticipate a rise in COVID-19 cases and hospitalisations (including severe ones among the elderly) over winter and some related economic impacts – in particular workplace absenteeism.

The current situation in New Zealand

COVID-19 and other Severe Acute Respiratory Infections

1. COVID-19 hospitalisations in New Zealand and reported case numbers are both down from their peaks in March 2022 and have plateaued. Still, reported case numbers are an incomplete metric and hospitalisations may soon rise again as more individuals aged over 70 are reporting becoming infected. With the recent identification of more transmissible Omicron subvariants, BA.4 and BA.5, modellers judge it likely that New Zealand will experience a second peak of cases in July. That peak is expected to be lower than in the past because of immunity build-up from previous infections and vaccinations – though these sources of immunity may wane through winter.
2. Hospitalisations related to Severe Acute Respiratory Infections (SARI) have been rising with influenza now the virus detected most often among SARI patients for the first time since 2019. In the week ending 5 June, the influenza virus was identified in 66 SARI patients, the virus causing COVID-19 was identified in five patients, and rhinovirus (principal cause of the common cold) was identified in 12 patients.
3. Influenza vaccinations have been available from April 2022 and are fully funded for vulnerable groups.¹ While more than 60 percent of people over 65 years old have received the influenza jab, uptake is lower among Māori and Pacific individuals and far lower (around 25 percent) among those aged 55 to 65.

COVID-19 treatment availability

4. The greater availability of treatments (including antivirals, antibody treatments and corticosteroids) could mean New Zealand is better placed to mitigate an increase in cases over winter than other countries that experienced their Omicron peaks before these were available. Studies suggest that these treatments can shorten the disease course and reduce the odds of severe illness and hospitalisation for those most vulnerable to COVID-19. Still, they do not appear to prevent infection or completely block transmission. And much will depend on whether vulnerable groups, including

¹Including all people 65 and over, people under 65 with specific medical conditions, pregnant people, children 4 years or younger who have been hospitalised with a respiratory illness and Māori and Pacific peoples aged 55 years and over.

the elderly, Māori and Pacific people, get timely access to treatments – many of which need to be taken early in the course of an illness to have a material effect.

5. Pharmac has secured supply of six treatments for active COVID-19 infection, with three of these approved by MedSafe to treat COVID-19. Paxlovid and Lagevrio (brand name) are available in the community and are, in most cases, prescribed by a General Practitioner after a clinical assessment.

Workforce absenteeism

6. A rise in workplace absenteeism has coincided with the rise of Omicron cases in the community and rising inflation. Together these pressures are likely to adversely affect the economy. The number of employed people in the March 2022 quarter who gave sickness, illness, or injury as the main reason they were away from work for a full week was up 67 percent compared with the same time last year. Long COVID is likely to weigh further on absenteeism and labour participation.

COVID-19 during the 2021-22 winter in the Northern Hemisphere

7. Many Northern Hemisphere countries had Omicron peaks that coincided with their 2021-22 winter months when the combination of a cooler, dryer climate, winter behaviour (eg, indoor gatherings), and waning immunity from past vaccination drives allowed respiratory illnesses to spread more easily. Across the Northern Hemisphere, influenza activity, although still low relative to 2019, began to rise in December and decreased in late January. These relatively minor influenza seasons are likely best explained by changed behaviour (mask wearing, social distancing and limited travel). As-yet-unproven research also suggests that infection by one respiratory virus may block a second from taking hold. However, much is still unknown about such 'viral interference' and there will almost certainly be cases of people infected with multiple viruses at the individual level.

Case 1: The United Kingdom

8. In 2021-22 the UK experienced a surge in COVID-19 cases over winter but a smaller-than-typical influenza season. Pressure on the health system consisted mainly in hospitalisations, with ICU patients unchanged. Most of the damage was economic, with public health measures slowing recovery and consumer-facing businesses hardest hit.
9. Average weekly cases per million rose from approximately 640 in late November to a peak of approximately 2650 in the middle of winter. (New Zealand peaked at around 4300 in March) In February 2022, case numbers returned to below the level observed in November when the first Omicron case was detected in the UK.
10. The number of COVID-19 patients in hospital rose sharply after the first case of Omicron was detected increasing from approximately 210 per million in November, to a peak of around 570 per million in January (New Zealand's peaked at around 170 per million). COVID deaths reached 18 per million in January (New Zealand's peak was around four per million in April). As the number of cases of Omicron detected began to drop so too did the pressure on hospitals, including in intensive care units (ICUs). Much of the pressure on the healthcare system in the UK was driven by illness among, and isolation requirements for, workers.
11. Consumer-facing businesses in the UK were hit hard by Omicron and the corresponding public health measures. These included work from home guidance, enforced face mask wearing, COVID-19 passes being required in indoor venues and daily testing for people identified as a close contact, with isolation for those who tested positive. This slowed growth and contributed to a 3% decline in consumer-facing services compared to the previous month. The economy experienced incremental growth as the winter period came to an end.

Case 2: Ireland

12. Like the UK, Ireland experienced an Omicron peak during winter, a relatively minor influenza season and a dip in economic activity – which it's since struggled to recover from.
13. Omicron was reported in Ireland at the start of winter. The weekly average case numbers per million rose from at that point in time was around 900 in late November before peaking at around 4750 in the middle of winter. Meanwhile, influenza activity remained low throughout December and

January, then picked up significantly throughout February with activity remaining high past the end of the winter season.

14. The strain on the healthcare system caused by the Omicron wave subsided towards the end of winter. The number of people in hospital with COVID-19 peaked in January at around 400 per million. The numbers of ICU patients with COVID-19 peaked at around 44 per million and COVID deaths reached around 10 per million. As in the UK, part of the strain on the healthcare system was driven by illness and isolation requirements among workers.
15. Public health restrictions in place at the start of the year to deal with Omicron dampened Ireland's economic growth in the first quarter of 2022, though the economy was already flagging with in part because of the Omicron wave. Ireland has since removed most public health restrictions. A rapidly recovering labour market, increased consumption through the draw-down of large household savings, and positive financial situation in the business sector, are expected to drive growth in 2022.
16. Surveys suggest that firms in Ireland are cautiously optimistic with 44 percent saying that business is stable and a similar number anticipating a rise in business activity over the next 3 months. While many identify COVID-19 as their major concern, longer term issues such as energy, cost inflation, and labour shortages are becoming more prominent.

Implications for New Zealand

17. The UK and Ireland's experiences suggest that COVID-19 and other respiratory illnesses are likely to combine to put strain on the New Zealand health system. This is consistent with modelling that suggests thousands in New Zealand could be hospitalised over winter and with early signs of pressure on the healthcare workforce. As in the UK and Ireland, New Zealand can also expect to see an increase in severe COVID-19 patients.
18. In addition, the UK's higher rates of ICU patients and deaths compared to Ireland may reflect an older population base (among other factors) and suggests that the elderly in New Zealand will be at risk this winter, especially those in damp or crowded conditions. The economic impacts are likely to be long-lasting. Like Ireland, labour shortages caused in part by COVID-19, will probably continue beyond winter.
19. However, there is still much uncertainty for New Zealand over winter and significant differences remain between our situation and those of the UK and Ireland. Among them:
 - **New Zealand experienced its Omicron peak at a later stage than the United Kingdom or Ireland.** Other countries experienced their Omicron peak during winter. By contrast, New Zealand's Omicron peak-to-date was in March 2022, in Autumn, after being first detected in January.
 - **New Zealand has not had the levels of infection, duration of outbreak experienced elsewhere, or the same pattern of subvariants.** Consequently, fewer New Zealanders have been exposed to COVID-19 than in most comparator countries. And almost all of New Zealand's infections have been with the BA2 Omicron subvariant, unlike the UK, Ireland and others (including Australia) that had mainly BA1 infections. It is uncertain what the New Zealand population's immunity to BA4 and BA5 is and what the risks of reinfection with BA2 are.
 - **Antivirals have recently been approved for use in New Zealand.** This may mean the rates of hospitalisation and severe illness as a result of COVID-19 are reduced and less of a strain on the health system and workforce absenteeism.
 - **New Zealand has recently opened its international border.** This could result in diseases previously kept out due to travel restrictions now entering New Zealand via travellers from other countries. New Zealand will revert to the level of risk seen pre-border closure. Newer variants of known diseases such as influenza, measles, and COVID-19 could enter the country.
 - **Most of New Zealand's booster vaccinations were administered in the spring and summer, not in the build-up to winter.** The UK and Ireland, on the other hand, conducted vaccine drives in late autumn and so likely went into winter with high vaccine-induced immunity in their populations.

3. Ministry of Health

This section is temporarily shortened while the COVID-19 Response Directorate from Ministry of Health is being transferred to interim Health New Zealand (iHNZ).

3.1 Technical Advisory Group: update

COVID-19 TAG

The COVID-19 Technical Advisory Group (COVID-19 TAG) did not meet in the week commencing 6 June 2022. The next COVID-19 TAG meeting is scheduled for 17 June 2022.

CV TAG

The COVID-19 Vaccine Technical Advisory Group (CV TAG) did not meet in the week commencing 6 June 2022. The next CV TAG meeting is scheduled for 21 June 2022.

Therapeutics TAG

The COVID-19 Therapeutics Technical Advisory Group (Therapeutics TAG) did not meet in the week commencing 6 June 2022. The next Therapeutics TAG meeting is scheduled for early July 2022 (TBC).

CT TAG

The COVID-19 Testing Technical Advisory Group (CT TAG) met on 13 June 2022.

3.2 Upcoming communications issues and activities

As 14 June 2022:

Date	Activity	Lead agency	Comms material	Ministerial Involvement
Week commencing 20 June, probably 22 June	Variants of Concern announcement – Minister Verrall Full communications plan being drafted. This is likely to be in the form of a technical media briefing.	MoH	Full communications plan	Minister Verrall
Week commencing 20 June (TBC)	Reinfection advice – full communications being drafted	MoH	Full communications plan	Minister Verrall
Late June – probably week commencing 20 June	Border worker testing and removal of border workers from the Vaccinations Order, and removal of pre-departure test requirements. Stakeholder comms to go the day before to PCBUs, public sector agencies – MBIE, WorkSafe, Customs, Aviation Security Service, MPI, Police. Media statement and reactive lines/Ministerial announcement.	MoH	Stakeholder engagement only	No
Week commencing 20 June	Review of CPF settings – TBC	TBC	TBC	TBC
Ongoing	Lollisponge PCR test trial – Testing team is trialling the Lollisponge PCR test with two Māori disability community providers for usability. The Lollisponge collects a saliva sample with a sponge and is less invasive than nasal and nasopharyngeal sample methods. A small communications trial will also be undertaken with one provider, who will make a video for their stakeholders based on MoH guidance. Easy-to-read instructions and a video on how to take the test are being created	MoH	Social media video	No.

Ongoing	Testing – who to test / where to test/ record results on My Covid Record/traveller requirements messaging	MoH DPMC MBIE	Key messages, website stakeholder communications	No
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Proactively Released

4. Managed Isolation and Quarantine Weekly Report

4.1 Items to note/updates

A judgment has been released from Justice Mallon on relief in the Grounded Kiwis case. The Ministry are preparing a note that will provide you with detail on the declarations and possible implications of this judgement.

4.2 Transition and readiness

4.2.1 Workforce

The formal change process for the remaining MIQ facilities, and our regional and national offices is ongoing. The decision for the new operating model was announced on June 15 and will begin to be implemented mid-July. The intent is for this new structure to take effect from 1 August. There will be a period of transition throughout August and September where the new structure and parts of the existing structure will co-exist. The new structure of the MIQ Group Leadership Team is detailed in the briefing to the incoming Minister, which will be sent to your office on 17 June.

4.2.2 Decommissioning of facilities

A total of 26 facilities have been decommissioned and handed back. The Commodore Hotel Christchurch has now been de-designated and will also be decommissioned by the end of June. Decommissioning for the final three currently in-use facilities is on track and they will be deactivated by the end of June, with community cases being supported by the National Alternative Accommodation Service from 1 July. Decommissioning dates for the three regional offices are now confirmed with Central planned for 31 June, Christchurch planned for 15 August and Auckland, 31 August.

Facility decommissioning status

Facility (by region)	Tranche	Current occupancy	Current phase	Staff on site within last 7 days	Hand-back date	Facility RAG status
Auckland						
Jet Park	Core facility	Occupied (12 pax)	N/A core facility	77	N/A	N/A
Holiday Inn	Core facility	Occupied (20 pax)	N/A core facility	57	N/A	N/A
Waipuna Auckland	Core facility	Occupied (46 pax)	N/A core facility	58	N/A	N/A
Hamilton						
Amohia (Jet Park)	Three	Empty	De-designated		30/6/22	
Rotorua						
Sudima	Three	Empty	De-designated		30/6/22	
Christchurch						
Commodore	Three	Empty	De-designated		30/6/22	
Totals:		78		193 Staff		

4.3 Operational update

4.3.1 Current occupancy

MIQ has three facilities in Auckland that are designated as MIQ facilities. These facilities provide support to community cases (including close contacts) who are unable to safely isolate at home, as well as refugees, evacuees, and some mariners.

As of 15 June 2022, there were 78 people in Managed Isolation and Quarantine.

Facility	Total People in Facility	People in Quarantine	Community Cases	Mariners/Air Crew:	Evacuees/Refugees:
Holiday Inn	22	21	10	1	0
JetPark	9	8	8	0	1
Waipuna	8	0	0	0	8
Total	39	29	18	1	9

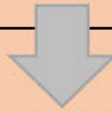
4.3.2 Group arrivals update

Summary of approved group arrivals as of 7 June 2022 (to end June 2022)

Group	Date of Arrival	Allocation Approved	Final number of rooms allocated	Comments
Refugee Quota	13 June – 19 June	15	6 (15 pax)	The Refugee Centre is forecasting arrivals of 45 pax (30 rooms) per fortnight until end of June 2022. They are confident they will meet their target of 800 refugees for the fiscal year 21/22. The refugee centre has agreed that the last date for MIQ arrivals is 17 June.
Afghanistan Arrivals	13 June – 19 June	0	0	There are approximately 100 Afghanistan Evacuees to arrive before the end of July. They will arrive sporadically in small groups and not all of them will enter MIQ. MFAT have agreed that the last date for MIQ arrivals is 17 June.

This will be the last group arrival update as there are no arrivals after 17 June.

4.3.3 Invoicing

INVOICES ISSUED	INVOICES PAID	INVOICES ISSUED - NOT YET DUE	INVOICES OVERDUE
57,574	40,920 (69% of invoices issued)	2,028 (7% of invoices issued)	14,626 (24% of invoices issued)
TOTAL VALUE OF INVOICES ISSUED \$218m	PAID (BY VALUE) \$173M 79.2%	ISSUED - NOT YET DUE (BY VALUE) \$3.9M 1.8%	INVOICES OVERDUE (BY VALUE) \$41.3M 18.9%
Automated and manual invoice batches are up to date, and we are working through the ad hoc invoices. With invoicing up to date, we 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 7,361 invoices \$25.5M (by value) 11.7% (by value of all invoices issued)

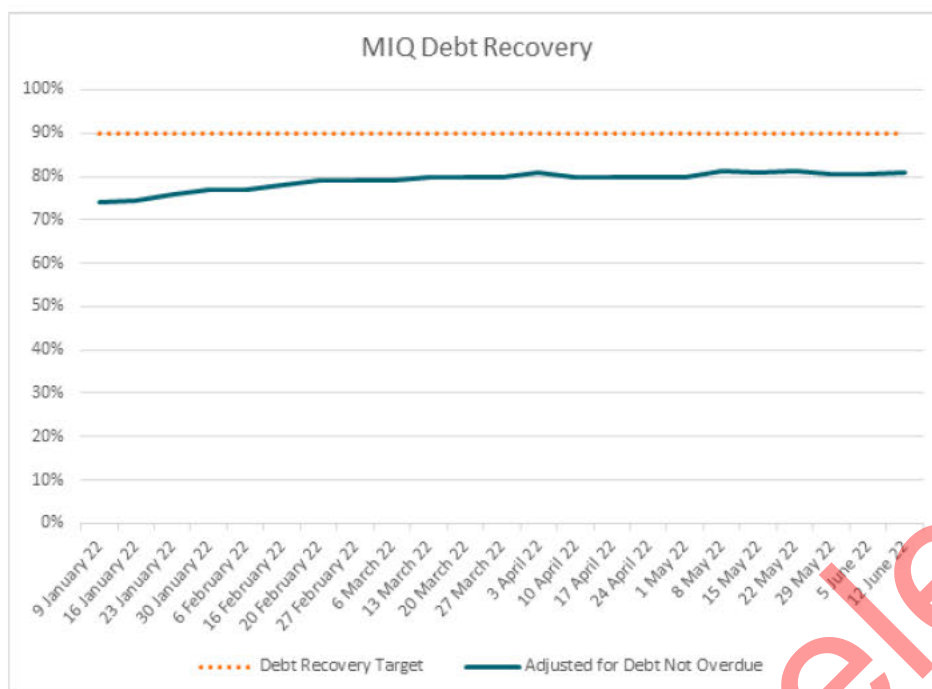
4.3.4 Debt recovery

The debt recovery percentage remains at 81% (against our nominal target recovery of 90%).

As of 12 June 2022, 10,671 invoices worth \$35.6m have been passed to our debt partner.

- \$13.5m has now been paid (an increase of \$569k).
- A further \$521,000 of debt is under instalment and is expected to be converted to payments over coming weeks.
- Of the invoices sent, 288 customers worth \$793,000 have now submitted waiver applications. While applications are processed, they are recorded as outstanding debt.

Percentage of MIQ Debt Recovery



4.3.5 Fee waivers

The table below breaks down the waiver application information between 11 August 2020 and 14 June 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
18,771	3,308	15,011	102	9,591	109	1,968	2,742	499
Overall Approved 66.5% (of completed applications)						Overall Declined 33.5% (of completed applications)		

4.3.6 Reducing the fee waiver backlog

		Last week (at 5 June)
TOTAL BACKLOG AT 14 June 2022:		502
Made up of:	i) Processing or to be processed	345
	ii) Waiting for Customer	157

4.4 Ombudsman complaints

There are 14 active investigations:

- one is on policy advice;
- four are on emergency allocations;
- two are on exemptions from managed isolation;

- four relate to declined fee waiver decisions;
- two are about facilities; and
- and one is the Chief Ombudsman’s self-initiated investigation.

There are 75 preliminary enquiries (cases where the Ombudsman requests the file to assess the complaint and determine next steps).

4.5 Upcoming communications issues and activities

As of 12 June 2022:

Date	Activity	Lead agency	Comms material	Ministerial Involvement Y/N
June (TBC)	Ombudsman Self-Initiated Investigation findings	MIQ	Reactive comms	Y
June (TBC)	Grounded Kiwis judicial review - final declaratory statement	MIQ/Crown Law	TBC	TBC

Proactively Released



5. Border Executive Board Report

5.1 Border Executive Board meetings

The Board did not meet this week. The next meeting is on 22 June 2022.

Reconnecting New Zealanders Programme

The BEB picked up oversight and governance of the Reconnecting New Zealanders Programme from DPMC from 7 June 2022. The next substantive update will be provided closer to Step 4 on 4 July 2022. There are no issues to report. Preparations are underway to implement the removal of pre-departure testing from 11.59pm on 20 June 2022. An update on readiness will be provided to your office on Friday 17 June 2022.

Revoking the COVID-19 Public Health Response (Required Testing) Order 2020

As you are aware, the RTO will be revoked and is due to come into effect from 11.59pm on 30 June 2022. The Board will be discussing health and safety for border agency staff at its 22 June 2022 meeting. The intent is to align practices where multiple border agencies share the same working environment.

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6. New Zealand Customs Service Weekly Report

6.1 Compliance checking at the air border

As part of Reconnecting New Zealanders, the COVID-19 Public Health Response (Air Border) Order 2021 came into force on 28 February 2022. Customs staff undertake compliance checks for all passengers on arrival for evidence of pre-departure testing or exemption, vaccination verification or exemption, or a travel pass.

Travellers who do not provide the required evidence may incur an infringement offence fee between \$500 and \$4,000 depending on the nature of the offence. Non-New Zealand citizens who do not provide the required evidence of vaccination status will be referred to Ministry of Health officials for further intervention.

For the period 7 to 13 June 2022 (both dates inclusive), a total of 44,453 passengers travelled to New Zealand. Of this number, 106 were considered to not meet the requirements for air travel into New Zealand:

- 10 travellers were issued warning letters, and 96 travellers have been issued with an infringement offence fee for not meeting pre-departure testing requirements
- No travellers have been issued with an infringement offence fee for not meeting vaccination verification requirements, and no travellers have been referred to Ministry of Health for further intervention.

6.2 COVID-19 Required Testing Order revoked

The former Minister for COVID-19 response, Hon Chris Hipkins authorised the revocation of the Required Testing Order which will come into effect at 11:59pm 30 June 2022.

Ministry of Health has advised that now that the border is considerably more open and there is widespread community transmission of COVID-19, a COVID-19 infection in a border worker provides no more or less risk to the community than any other person with the virus.

The Required Testing Order was enacted in August 2020, as a key component of the COVID-19 Elimination Strategy. With an elimination goal, there was a strong rationale to require testing of these workers, as they presented a higher risk of contracting COVID-19 if it entered into New Zealand. The Required Testing Order in its current form is no longer considered appropriate, as the group of workers covered by the Required Testing Order no longer form a critical element of our 'armour' against COVID-19 in the same way they did when the Required Testing Order was established.

As a consequence of the revocation on 26 June 2022, Customs along with other Persons Conducting a Business or Undertaking, will no longer be monitoring for compliance with the Order, border workers will no longer be required to undertake a surveillance test, and reporting on compliance in the Weekly Report will cease after next week.

Whilst Customs transitions away from the Order, Customs staff who are critical workers will continue to complete a Rapid Antigen Test if they are a close contact of a household case. Customs staff who face internationally arriving travellers, will be encouraged to continue to complete a Rapid Antigen Test.

Individual Persons Conducting a Business or Undertaking will also conduct their own risk assessments under the Health and Safety at Work Act to understand what arrangements might be established for a surveillance regime if it is deemed necessary.

Ministry of Health will continue to supply Rapid Antigen Test kits to Persons Conducting a Business or Undertaking (PCBU) at no cost, until the end of October 2022. However, if PCBU in the Public Service wish to implement their own surveillance regimes, Rapid Antigen Test kits will continue to be supplied by Ministry of Health from 1 November 2022, at a cost.

6.3 New Zealand traveller declaration

Pre-departure test removal process

On 13 June 2022, Cabinet agreed to remove the pre-departure testing requirement for all travellers from 11.59pm 20 June 2022. s9(2)(g)(i)

The New Zealand Traveller Declaration team is currently informing other key airline and aviation stakeholders.

Officials have advised Ministers that if there is a need to reinstate pre-departure testing in the future, a reasonable amount of lead-in time is required to avoid significant operational disruption to travellers, airlines and airports. Time would also be required to make technical changes to the New Zealand Traveller Declaration system.

Regardless of the lead-in time, a manual process is required to authenticate every pre-departure test. Unlike vaccination certificates, there are few international standards to build robust rules in which pre-departure tests can be automatically verified by the New Zealand Traveller Declaration system.

In preparation for the removal of pre-departure testing requirements, the New Zealand Traveller Declaration team will:

- update the New Zealand Traveller Declaration system to reflect updated Health rules (to be implemented once Gazette notice is published);
- update the New Zealand Traveller Declaration website and supporting content including the 'Traveller Factsheet' and 'Friends and Whānau' video;
- email all travellers who have started a Traveller Declaration, to inform them of the change to pre-departure test requirements; and
- meet with key partners, including airlines, to verbally brief them under embargo on change to pre-departure test requirements.

Customs and Excise (Traveller Declaration) Amendment Bill

The Cabinet paper seeking approval to the proposed amendments will now be considered at the 29 June 2022 Cabinet Social Wellbeing Committee rather than the 22 June 2022. This will enable the Committee to consider this paper at the same time as the DPMC paper on the detailed proposals for the transition of COVID-19 related provisions.

s9(2)(f)(iv)

[Redacted content]

7. COVID-19 Chief Executives Board

The COVID-19 Chief Executives Board (CCB) met on Tuesday 14 June 2022. This provided an opportunity for Independent Chairs to give final reflections. The agenda included a general update on the COVID-19 Response, updates on planning around the transition of centrally-held response functions to a more business-as-usual approach, an update on variant plan post cabinet, and the work underway on the future legal framework.

8. Strategic COVID-19 Public Health Advisory Group

The Strategic COVID-19 Public Health Advisory Group met on Wednesday 15 June 2022. Officials from Ministry of Health and DPMC attended the meeting for a discussion on mortality from COVID-19 and related issues (supported by information provided by the MoH). The Group also discussed the progress of the pandemic and the New Zealand response, and the future role and membership of the Group.

The next meeting will be held on 29 June 2022 which will be the final meeting under the Group's current terms of reference and with Sir David Skegg as Chair and Philip Hill as member. The DPMC Secretariat for the Group are continuing to work with your office on the timing and process for the extension of the Group's terms of reference and new members to replace the outgoing members.

9. Business Leaders Forum

The Business Leaders Forum does not currently have a date for its next meeting.

10. Community Panel

The Community Panel did not meet this week and are next scheduled to meet on Thursday 30 June 2022. As the Panel's terms of reference expire on 30 June 2022, this will be their final meeting and will be held in Wellington. We are working with your office to arrange your attendance if possible.

11. Government Modelling Group

There are no updates from the Government Modelling Group this week. Future updates will be provided where significant.

12. Upcoming Cabinet Papers

s9(2)(f)(iv)



Proactively Released