



COVID-19 INDEPENDENT CONTINUOUS REVIEW, IMPROVEMENT AND ADVICE GROUP: MEETING AGENDA

Date & time	Tuesday 14 December 2021, 4.00-5.30pm
Location	https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82610684360?pwd=SWFnS3NlVjAxRC9Yc0R5NGpkdWl3OT09 Meeting ID: 826 1068 4360 Passcode: 721004
Attendees	Sir Brian Roche (Chair), Debbie Ryan, Dale Bramley, Philip Hill, Rob Fyfe, Amber Bill (DPMC), Martin Rogers (DPMC), Louise Cox (DPMC), Sharon Sternersen (DPMC, Item 1), Sir Ian Taylor (Item 2)

	Agenda item	Duration	Lead
1.	Reconnecting New Zealanders Programme	15 min	Sharon
2.	Self-isolation at the border	30 min	Philip & Sir Ian
3.	Health Committee debrief	15 min	Brian
4.	Next year	20 min	Brian
5.	Disclosures of interest and confirmation of minutes	5 min	Brian
6.	Any other business	5 min	All / Secretariat

COVID-19 Independent Continuous Review, Improvement and Advice Group Minutes

Date	Tuesday 14 December 2021	
Time	4:00-5:30pm	
Venue	Zoom	
Attendees	Sir Brian Roche (Chair) Debbie Ryan Dale Bramley Philip Hill Rob Fyfe	Amber Bill (DPMC) Louise Cox (DPMC) Martin Rodgers (DPMC) Sharon Stenersen (DPMC) Sir Ian Taylor (Item 2)
Minute taker	Louise Cox	

Item 1: Reconnecting New Zealanders programme update

1. Sharon Stenersen attended to provide the regular update on the *Reconnecting New Zealanders* programme.
2. Sharon updated the Group on the New Zealand Custom Service's (Customs) progress with the border implementation work (including a readiness framework) and the Traveller Health Declaration System.
3. Sharon also reported that the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment (MBIE) are the lead for self-isolation, with the Ministry of Health (MOH) supporting testing on arrival and technology platforms to data-match Nau Mai Rā information, NHI and test results. She also updated on the self-isolation pilot, noting the timeframes for completion and that lessons are being incorporated into work currently underway on a model for implementation. The Group were interested in the integration of the MBIE and MOH roles and oversight across the work. Sharon and the DPMC Secretariat responded that MOH has strategic oversight with support from across the system and Customs' readiness framework enables line of sight across the work.
4. Dale asked what planning or thinking is underway in respect of Omicron and the borders. Sharon replied that MOH are in the process of gathering data, noting that emerging information will inform early January papers and discussions.

5. Brian asked if there are performance standards that will apply for testing. Sharon described how the testing will occur, including what type of testing will occur on which day and where. She noted that MOH are looking at technology to track test results.

Item 2: Self isolation at the border

6. Philip introduced Sir Ian Taylor to talk about his experience as a part of the self-isolation pilot and the privately funded #151 Off The Bench trial (151 Trial).
7. Sir Ian began with providing context for the discussion. He raised that through the success of the 151 Trial that his view was that people could be safely brought home. He suggested that the process could be used starting with business and that conversations with key people should occur to discuss how to prioritise other people to bring back to New Zealand (based on humanitarian need). He added further that the trialled process can operate at scale.
8. Sir Ian described the rapid PCR test developed by Lucira, noting that the fast turnaround of results could be a game changer for safety at the borders and could, in his view, enable New Zealand to again be one of the safest places in the world. He expressed a desire to have a conversation in the new year with key people to share ideas.
9. Brian raised that he is interested in exploring this further with Sir Ian, noting that the system needs more innovation. He ventured that the technology presents a lot of possibilities without trivialising the risk. Sir Ian noted that their team has had risk at the forefront since the outset.
10. Rob offered some perspectives based on his recent overseas travel and current stay in Managed Isolation and Quarantine (MIQ). His experience of MIQ has been that the processes are sound, although the transport to the MIQ facility is a key risk dimension to be managed.
11. Rob commented on the Lucira test, noting that he has used four during his trip (supervised use through a telehealth service). He raised that there are other tests in use now that have even higher accuracy, observing that New Zealand needs to adopt the latest technology in this space. He suggested that New Zealand's 'one size fits all' solutions have stifled innovation, and that specifications should be set by Government [as opposed to determining the solution].
12. Brian raised that we do not currently have real-time data and effective prioritisation, and that good use of data would present opportunities. Sir Ian noted that the impact of the border settings and processes have a very real impact on businesses. For example, due to the uncertainty and logistical difficulty of travelling, people are instead having to move offshore to meet client expectations.
13. Sir Ian raised that we need to have scalable systems in place and that flexibility is required so that different tests can be used as tests improve. He used the example that the United States of America's requirement for a predeparture test within 24 hours makes it difficult to travel there due to New Zealand's current testing turnaround times. Brian stated that he is keen to engage to get a sense of practical innovations that could be used to modify the status quo.
14. Philip raised that the loop-mediated isothermal amplification (LAMP) tests are probably the way forward. He noted that Rapid Antigen Tests have a methodological block that cannot

move beyond certain sensitivity. He also noted the issue of sensitivity being affected by changes over the course of a person's illness (for example, an asymptomatic case with evolving illness is more difficult to test with accuracy). He further stated that LAMP tests are a lot better than cartridge-based PCR tests where supply and volume issues exist.

15. Sir Ian reiterated that business could be an appropriate cohort to progress further piloting of the 151 Trial, particularly given they could self-fund as a cost of business and noting this would have less impact on government. He furthered that accreditation and audit processes could be in place and that this could, in his view, have a big impact on the country's economy. Philip suggested this would be a natural extension of the *Reconnecting New Zealanders* self-isolation pilot but with new criteria. He added that if this is scalable and done well it would be hard to argue against the benefit. Brian raised that there needs to be clear ownership of a controlled pilot.
16. There was discussion about the steps that could be taken to progress this pathway across the border, including how risk could be effectively managed. Sir Ian noted that, in his view, the model for the 15 Trial was safer than the *Reconnecting New Zealanders* pilot due to the monitoring processes including automated technological solutions.
17. Rob raised that Omicron will likely jeopardise the January 17 date for the first phase of reopening. Sir Ian added that the testing regime is the most important element and should be the priority focus.
18. Debbie raised that the communities that have been most affected by outbreaks are often at the service end in respect of the border. She enquired as to how closely this is being looked at in terms of risk analysis. Sir Ian assured that the risks to Pacific and Māori communities sit high in their discussions.
19. Dale raised that he is interested in the application of the model to help address the humanitarian issues caused by border restrictions and processes. Sir Ian expressed the desire for that to run in parallel with a business focussed trial, noting his confidence in the ability to keep those people safe. Rob suggested that businesses would likely be amenable to the concept of a sponsorship scheme to support a humanitarian cohort to return and self-isolate as part of a trial.
20. Philip raised that it is important for the health voice to be present, observing that from his point of view, the model appears to have a good safety profile in terms of health risk. Sir Ian raised that there is a need for speed with winter looming on the horizon and the prospect of influenza becoming part of the equation, noting that we do not want to be in a position where we have to be reactive and lockdowns are required. Philip raised that Sir Ian might want to consider having some health experts look at the model.
21. The DPMC Secretariat summarised the three elements that had emerged from the discussion as:
 - Testing innovation
 - Potential business pathway

- Prioritised programme (alternative pathway to address humanitarian need).

22. Rob added that the pace of thinking around testing needs to align with target dates for reopening.

Item 3: Health Committee debrief

23. Brian gave a brief summary of his appearance at the Health Select Committee (supported by the DPMC Secretariat). He reflected that the line of questioning focussed on the future more than on the past. He also reported that there was a focus on the Group's recommendation of a centralised unit, noting no disagreement was apparent.

Item 4: Next year

24. The Group discussed how they might wish to operate in the new year. Brian noted the scenario focussed work of the Strategic COVID-19 Public Health Advisory Group and raised whether there would be any value in the Group looking at that work from a system perspective. Philip agreed that there would be value and suggested that the issue of boosters could be a focus and will be a major issue for next year in terms of getting high rates across the population.

25. Rob reflected that the Group's mandate of continuous improvement advice across the whole of the system (as established in the Terms of Reference) is very broad and it may be more effective to have a narrower focus such as movement across the border. Brian supported Rob's point adding that a focus on movement across the border could include adjacent areas such as the testing regime and home isolation that will be critical areas next year.

26. Philip put forward that the Group could either look at system components or attributes. He raised that the safe handling of Omicron while allowing people across the border will be a huge challenge.

27. Brian tasked the members of the Group to individually reflect on what could be the Group's focus in the new year.

Item 5: Disclosures of interest and confirmation of minutes

28. No disclosures of interest and the minutes were confirmed without amendments.

Item 6: Other business

29. The Group expressed their wish to meet face-to-face either late January or early February and that the Minister for COVID-19 Response should be invited to attend.

30. ^{s9(2)(a)} [REDACTED]