

4 August 2021

Sir Brian Roche, Chair

COVID-19 Independent Continuous Review, Improvement and Advice Group

c/o Secretariat, COVID-19 Response Group, Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet

Tēnā koe

Thank for you your feedback, received on 9 July 2021, on the joint briefing *Quarantine-Free Travel Zone with Australia: Key Learnings and Process Improvements* to Hon Chris Hipkins, Minister for COVID-19 Response. We appreciate your feedback and ongoing work to support the Government's commitment to continuous improvement.

We will incorporate your feedback into any future Quarantine-Free Travel (QFT) reviews, including the upcoming review of the health response to the New South Wales QFT case in the Wellington community.

In addition, we set out below responses to specific points you have raised.

Future reviews should include more information about how debriefs are undertaken and why

There are standard processes in place to initiate these reviews, including templates and an agreed process for implementing and tracking recommendations. As part of this process and our commitment to keeping the public well informed, incident reviews are publicly available on the Ministry of Health's website. This process is currently being streamlined and strengthened to ensure the process around reviews is as effective as possible.

Future QFT reviews should incorporate forward looking opinion and recommendations for short, medium and longer-term components of QFT

The agreed review processes incorporate mechanisms to record and track recommendations, including a recommended timeframe based on priority. These are then tracked and monitored to ensure implementation of recommendations.

Broader than QFT, officials are also developing advice for Cabinet on the Elimination Strategy and Reconnecting New Zealanders work programmes. In particular, advice is being prepared on the future state of the New Zealand border, the future of the managed isolation and quarantine function, and traveler health declaration system. These pieces of advice will all impact the continuous evolution of QFT, and we welcome your continued advice and comment on the Elimination Strategy and Reconnecting New Zealanders work.

Scenario planning also continues to be a focus for the Ministry of Health and DPMC, to test New Zealand's readiness and plan for identified gaps in the system, as articulated with the 'prepare for it' pillar of the Elimination Strategy.

Incoming traveller requirements

You queried whether the requirements of incoming tourists have been reviewed, including whether mandatory scanning had been considered for these travelers. As part of the Reconnecting New Zealanders work, we will continue to look at what requirements should be placed on incoming travellers.

The usefulness of the system process map, (which was attached as Appendix 2)

The draft of the process map that was attached to the briefing you reviewed has now been superseded by the National Response Plan, which is refined quarterly in accordance with our commitment to continuous improvement and informed by lessons from exercises, reviews and responses.

We acknowledge and are encouraged by the shift in the way you intend to provide advice and insights in the future. Involving your group earlier in the consultation period will be beneficial to the development of government advice.

Thank you again for taking the time to provide comment on the *Quarantine-Free Travel Zone with Australia: Key Learnings and Process Improvements* briefing. We look forward to working alongside your group, as we continue to keep COVID-19 out of New Zealand's communities, as well as prepare for a gradual, well-informed and safe reconnection with the world.

Nāku noa, nā

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