



28 January 2022

Ref: DOIA 2122-0692

Adam Irish

Email: fyi-request-16839-1bbf8844@requests.fyi.org.nz

Dear Adam Irish

Thank you for your email of 22 September 2021 to the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment (the Ministry) requesting, under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act), the following information:

I request under the Official Information Act on what basis is the justification for not prioritising New Zealand Citizens over New Zealand Residents and New Zealand Permanent Residence in the spaces in MIQ and returning to New Zealand. Does not New Zealand under Human rights and UN conventions have an immediate obligation to its own citizens first and over that of other nationals. Why are New Zealand residents and permanent residents being allowed to compete and as a consequent crowd out and disadvantage New Zealand Citizens with regards to having a place in MIQ and the ability to return to New Zealand.

Additionally I request the rational why New Zealand Citizens and Permanent residents based in Australian where reincluded in the last MIQ allocation. New Zealand Citizens in countries outside of Australia have immediate visa requirements that they can risk breaching if they cannot return to New Zealand which citizens of other countries do not have. This risk does not apply to New Zealand Citizens in Australia due to our Special Category Status which allows permanent stays their.

Lastly I request does MBIE and the government have a strategy to have sufficient MIQ places to deal with the demand shown in the last MIQ allocation. And what is the timeframe that they expect to address this backlog by.

On 20 October 2021, the Ministry advised of an extension to 26 November 2021 to respond to your request. You were notified on 26 November 2021 that the Ministry had failed to meet this extended deadline. We apologise for the delay in responding to your request.

From the start of the COVID-19 pandemic the Government made the decision to treat New Zealand permanent residents and residence-class visa holders living in New Zealand in a similar manner to New Zealand citizens. This reflects the legal status of these people under New Zealand's Immigration Act, which gives them a legal right to enter New Zealand. It also reflects the reality that these people have made a life in New Zealand, frequently as the immediate family of New Zealand citizens.

Throughout the operation of MIQ, New Zealanders have consistently made up a significant majority of the travellers securing MIQ rooms. While the exact number varies, New Zealanders (whether citizens or residents) have consistently used between 75% and 85% of MIQ rooms booked through the online booking system, with New Zealand citizens occupying around two thirds of rooms MIQ rooms.

Eligible travellers from Australia have been included in MIQ lobby releases to give them a fair opportunity to travel to New Zealand. People may be seeking to travel to New Zealand for a number of reasons, including to move (back) here permanently, to see family, or to take up work. Both before and throughout the COVID-19 pandemic travellers from Australia have made up the largest single group of arrivals into New Zealand, reflecting the deep social, economic, and family links that New Zealanders have with Australia.

MIQ has made specific allowance to ensure that New Zealand citizens overseas who are no longer eligible to remain in the country they are in due to visa limitations are able to return home. MIQ Emergency Allocation Requests allow for New Zealand citizens and residents, who have immediate needs based on the lack of a visa to remain in another country, to make an application under Category 2(c). Information on eligibility under Category 2(c) and the application process can be found at: www.miq.govt.nz/travel-to-new-zealand/secure-your-place-in-managed-isolation/emergency-allocation-requests/.

Over the course of the COVID-19 pandemic MIQ has operated as New Zealand's first line of defence against COVID-19, while enabling as many people to enter the country as can be safely accommodated – helping more than 217,000 people enter New Zealand since March 2020. There is not an unlimited number of MIQ rooms, and so while we have continuously worked to maximise the number of people who can enter New Zealand, our first priority has had to be ensuring arrivals in New Zealand occur in a safe, managed way.

You can find out more about the Government's strategy to safely re-open our borders – *Reconnecting New Zealanders to the World* – on the Unite Against COVID-19 website: <https://covid19.govt.nz/travel/reconnecting-new-zealand-to-the-world/>

It is not possible to create an estimate of how long before all demand for MIQ rooms is met, as the demand for MIQ rooms is continuously changing.

However, demand for MIQ vouchers has been generally falling since the beginning of the virtual lobby system in September 2021. Information on each of these can be found on the 'News' page of the MIQ website: www.miq.govt.nz/about/news?start=0. The most recent data on this page (for the voucher release that occurred on 6 January 2022) shows the number of groups of travellers seeking vouchers falling from 31,900 in the first lobby release (20 September 2021) to as low as 3,852 groups for the release that occurred on 16 December 2021. Over this same period, almost 40,000 rooms have been allocated to travellers.

You have the right to seek an investigation and review by the Ombudsman of this decision. Information about how to make a complaint is available at www.ombudsman.parliament.nz or freephone 0800 802 602.

Yours sincerely



Nora Burghart
Acting General Manager Policy
Managed Isolation and Quarantine