

# Hon Chris Hipkins

MP for Remutaka

Minister for COVID-19 Response

Minister of Education

Minister for the Public Service

Leader of the House



January 2022

David Parker

[fyi-request-18100-dd0e7d68@requests.fyi.org.nz](mailto:fyi-request-18100-dd0e7d68@requests.fyi.org.nz)

Ref. OIA0572

Dear David

Thank you for your email of 11 January 2022 requesting for the following information under the Official Information Act (1982) (the Act):

*I respectfully request copies of all information including emails, SMS/texts, WhatsApp and other messages that you and your office in the capacity of Minister for the COVID-19 Response, have sent and received, from 1 Jan 2021 - 4 Jan 2022, which led you to the decision to prioritise the entry of foreign entertainers into New Zealand over overseas-based New Zealanders.*

As there have been no discussions or decisions to prioritise overseas entertainers over returning New Zealanders, I am refusing your request pursuant to section 18(e) of the Act.

The lobby releases for MIQ Managed Isolation Allocation System (MIAS) vouchers are open to everyone who has a legal right to enter New Zealand (citizens, residents, visa holders). Places within the lobby queue are assigned randomly, with no priority given to any particular type of traveller. I note that in the lobby release in December 2021, over 800 vouchers were not picked up (approximately 500 for December and 300 for March).

Emergency Allocation Requests for Managed Isolation and Quarantine (MIQ) vouchers exist for New Zealanders who require urgent travel to New Zealand within 14 days of application, and who meet the criteria set out on the MIQ website. Information on the criteria and the process is available here:

<https://www.miq.govt.nz/travel-to-new-zealand/secure-your-place-in-managed-isolation/emergency-allocation-requests/>

In November 2021, the Border Exception Ministerial Group agreed to establish an ongoing allocation of 40 rooms per month for travel in the sports and cultural sectors to commence in December 2021. Sport New Zealand and the Ministry for Culture and Heritage are jointly responsible for deciding how these rooms are allocated based on predetermined criteria. This could include internationally recognised popular music, opera singers or bands looking to return to New Zealand to promote albums through touring, or appearing at significant festivals. The decisions around the allocation of these rooms are made by the respective agencies and not by Ministers.

You have the right to seek an investigation and review by the Ombudsman of my decision to withhold information relating to this request, in accordance with section 28(3) of the Act. The relevant details can be found at: [www.ombudsman.parliament.nz](http://www.ombudsman.parliament.nz).

Yours sincerely



**Chris Hipkins**  
**Minister for COVID-19 Response**