

Aide Memoire – Update on the development of New Zealand’s digital COVID-19 vaccination certificate

This Aide Memoire covers:

- *Update on the development of New Zealand’s digital COVID-19 vaccination certificate.*
To be discussed at the Reconnecting New Zealanders Ministers meeting on 30 September.

Summary

The report provides an update on the development of digital COVID 19 vaccination certificates for people vaccinated in New Zealand. The digital COVID-19 vaccination certificate is currently targeted to be publically available at the end of November. The digital certificate uses the EU’s Digital COVID-19 Certificate (EU DCC) format.

2 The key benefit of being part of the EU DCC trust framework is that it would enable New Zealand border agencies to recognise and trust the COVID-19 vaccination and test certificates issued by countries in the EU scheme, and in turn, New Zealand issued certificates would be recognised by all countries who have joined the scheme.

3 To support the operationalisation of New Zealand’s digital vaccination certificates the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (MFAT) is leading a process around the mutual technical recognition of New Zealand’s and other jurisdictions’ COVID-19 health credentials. This includes discussions with the EU about becoming a third country to the EU DCC (MFAT’s Aide Memoires 26 August and 30 August also refer).

4 s9(2)(g)(i), s6(b)(ii)

We will provide you with further information as this process evolves.

MFAT advice

5 The Ministry of Health has prepared this update. This is a noting paper only. MFAT was consulted on the paper and does not consider that anything needs to be proactively raised.

*COVID Policy and Coordination Division
Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade
27 September*

Aide Memoire – Vaccination certificates and traveller health declaration system report backs

This Aide Memoire covers two separate papers:

- *Update on the development of New Zealand’s digital COVID-19 vaccination certificate.* To be discussed at the Reconnecting New Zealanders Ministers meeting on 28 September.
- *Reconnecting New Zealanders: Report back on work with international partners in developing the traveller health declaration system.* To be discussed at Cabinet Social Well-being Committee on 29 September.

Update on the development of New Zealand’s digital COVID-19 vaccination certificate

Summary

The report provides an update on the development of digital COVID-19 vaccination certificates for people vaccinated in New Zealand. The digital COVID-19 vaccination certificate is currently targeted to be publically available at the end of November. The digital certificate uses the EU’s Digital COVID-19 Certificate (EU DCC) format.

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3 To support the operationalisation of New Zealand’s digital vaccination certificates the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (MFAT) is leading a process around the mutual technical recognition of New Zealand’s and other jurisdictions’ COVID-19 health credentials. This includes discussions with the EU about becoming a third country to the EU DCC (MFAT’s Aide Memoires 26 August and 30 August also refer).

4 s9(2)(g)(i), s6(b)(ii)

MFAT advice

5 The Ministry of Health has prepared this update. This is a noting paper only. MFAT was consulted on the paper and does not consider that anything needs to be proactively raised.

Reconnecting New Zealanders: Report back on work with international partners in developing the traveller health declaration system

Summary

6 This paper was requested by Cabinet Business Committee to provide a report on the ongoing work with international partners in relation to the development of the traveller health declaration. This follows the Cabinet paper and business case presented to Cabinet on 6 September on the traveller health declaration system for arrivals into New Zealand (MFAT Aide Memoire 30 August refers).

7 There is no one international standard or system for making an assessment on a traveller's COVID-19 risk profile. New Zealand is well connected internationally including through the World Health Organisation (WHO), the International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO) and MFAT's Post network. MFAT is closely following international developments.

8 s9(2)(g)(i)

MFAT advice

9 Customs New Zealand has prepared this paper. This is a noting paper only. MFAT was consulted on the Cabinet paper and does not consider that anything needs to be proactively raised.

*COVID Policy and Coordination Division
Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade
22 September*

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MFAT COVID-19

Vaccine Certificate Reporting

2 June 2021

RESTRICTED

Out of scope

Released under the Official Information Act

Out of scope

Asia

Out of scope

1 June - Singapore Formal Message: New Zealand and Singapore information exchange: Travel Health Pass: New Zealand and Singapore officials discussed preparations for the development of travel health passes in the context of COVID-19, including policy, technical-level considerations, and the need for alignment with multilateral standards.

Americas

Out of scope

Released under the Official Information Act

International Comparison Table - Vaccine Certificates

This report is produced by the MFAT COVID Policy and Coordination Division fortnightly. We intend for the main use of this data to be comparing across multiple jurisdictions, and advise verification before relying on any individual data point. New data shown in red.

UNCLASSIFIED

Jurisdiction	Mutual recognition agreements (list other jurisdictions)	Requested NZ Certificate/ Recognition
PACIFIC & AUSTRALIA		
Guam		
New Caledonia		
Samoa		Requested NZ certificate
ASIA		
China		
Hong Kong		Requested NZ certificate
Maldives		
Sri Lanka		Requested NZ certificate
South Korea		

Out of scope

Released under the Official Information Act

Out of scope

Jurisdiction

Taiwan

Thailand

EUROPE

Austria

Bulgaria

Croatia

Cyprus

Released under the Official Information Act

Mutual recognition agreements (list other jurisdictions)

Requested NZ Certificate/ Recognition

Requested NZ certificate

Out of scope

Jurisdiction

Denmark

European Union

Estonia

Georgia

Germany

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Mutual
recognition
agreements
(list other
jurisdictions)

Requested NZ
Certificate/
Recognition

Out of scope

Jurisdiction

Greece

Iceland

Ireland

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Mutual recognition agreements (list other jurisdictions)

Requested NZ Certificate/ Recognition

Out of scope

Jurisdiction

Lithuania

Moldova, Republic of

Montenegro

Poland

Romania

Slovenia

Switzerland

AMERICAS

Aruba

Barbados

Colombia

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Mutual
recognition
agreements
(list other
jurisdictions)

Requested NZ
Certificate/
Recognition

Out of scope

Jurisdiction

Ecuador

Guatemala

Uruguay

AFRICA & MIDDLE EAST

Kuwait

Israel

Lebanon

Qatar

Saudi Arabia

Seychelles

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Mutual recognition agreements (list other jurisdictions)

Requested NZ Certificate/ Recognition

Bahrain, Greece

Requested NZ certificate

Out of scope

Jurisdiction

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Mutual recognition agreements (list other jurisdictions)

Requested NZ Certificate/ Recognition

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8 October 2021

Minister of Foreign Affairs

For approval by

13 October 2021

Reconnecting New Zealanders Ministerial Group: New Zealand third country status to the EU Digital COVID Certificate

BRIEFING Decision Submission

PURPOSE

To seek a decision from the Reconnecting New Zealanders Ministerial Group that New Zealand formally requests to become a third country to the EU Digital COVID Certificate trust framework.

Tukunga tūtohua – Recommended referrals

Prime Minister	For concurrence by	18 October 2021
Minister of Finance	For approval by	18 October 2021
Minister for COVID-19 Response	For approval by	18 October 2021
Minister of Immigration	For approval by	18 October 2021
Minister of Transport	For approval by	18 October 2021
Associate Minister of Health (Māori Health)	For approval by	18 October 2021
Associate Minister of Health	For approval by	18 October 2021
Associate Minister of Health (Pacific Peoples)	For approval by	18 October 2021
Minister of Customs	For approval by	18 October 2021

Taipitopito whakapā – Contact details

NAME	ROLE	DIVISION	WORK PHONE
David Taylor	Divisional Manager	COVID Policy and Coordination Division	s9(2)(a)
Rachel Spence	Senior Policy Officer	COVID Policy and Coordination Division	

Mā te Tari Minita e whakakī – Minister's Office to complete

- | | | |
|--|---|------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Approved | <input type="checkbox"/> Noted | <input type="checkbox"/> Referred |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Needs amendment | <input type="checkbox"/> Declined | <input type="checkbox"/> Withdrawn |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Overtaken by events | <input type="checkbox"/> See Minister's notes | |

Comments

Reconnecting New Zealanders Ministerial Group: New Zealand third country status to the EU Digital COVID Certificate

Pito matua – Key points

- Officials seek a decision from the Reconnecting New Zealanders Ministerial Group that New Zealand formally requests to become a third country to the EU Digital COVID Certificate (EU DCC) trust framework. s6(a)
- An international digital vaccination certificate for anyone vaccinated in New Zealand will be publically available from the beginning of December 2021. Being part of the EU DCC trust framework would mean that New Zealand issued certificates would be recognised by all countries that join the EU DCC trust framework. It would also enable New Zealand border agencies, through the traveller health declaration system, to recognise and trust COVID-19 certificates issued by all countries in the EU DCC trust framework.
- Without third country status to the EU DCC, New Zealand would need to seek agreement from all EU countries, and other third countries to the EU DCC, that New Zealand's COVID-19 health certificates are recognised and accepted.
- Third country status is unilateral recognition by the EU that will mean New Zealand digital health certificates are treated as equivalent to EU DCCs, for the purposes of providing proof of vaccination and testing. New Zealand needs to assure the EU that in return, we would treat all EU DCCs and other certificates from third countries to the EU DCC, as equivalent to certificates issued by the New Zealand Government, for the purposes of providing proof of vaccination and testing.
- Officials have confirmed with the EU that New Zealand's border settings would not change should New Zealand become a third country to the EU DCC. Third country status would also not prevent New Zealand from imposing different border entry settings for New Zealand citizens and resident class visa holders, as compared to non-New Zealanders.
- The EU has a s6(a) that EU DCC holders permitted to enter New Zealand, should be treated in the same way as other non-New Zealanders. In other words, New Zealand should not discriminate on the basis of nationality in the imposition of health related measures at the border. This is consistent with the risk based assessment under the Reconnecting New Zealanders strategy that determines the entry pathway based on an individual's travel history, not nationality.
- There is currently no one globally adopted approach for verifiable COVID-19 health certificates. Officials made an early assessment that the EU DCC format was the most pragmatic solution for New Zealand, in order to deliver an international vaccination certificate by the beginning of December 2021.
- For countries outside of the EU DCC trust framework, officials are working through a process on the mutual technical recognition of New Zealand and partner jurisdictions' COVID-19 health credentials.
- If Ministers agree that New Zealand should formally request third country status to the EU DCC, the EU will commence the unilateral equivalence process. Officials would work with the EU around any public announcement.



David Taylor
for Secretary of Foreign Affairs and Trade

Reconnecting New Zealanders Ministerial Group: New Zealand third country status to the EU Digital COVID Certificate

Tūtohu – Recommendations

It is recommended that you:

- | | | |
|---|---|-----------------|
| 1 | Agree to New Zealand formally requesting to become a third country to the EU Digital COVID Certificate (EU DCC) trust framework. | Yes / No |
| 2 | Note that third country status is a unilateral recognition process by the EU that will mean that New Zealand digital health certificates are treated as equivalent to EU DCCs and other countries that join the EU DCC trust framework, for the purposes of providing proof of vaccination and testing | Yes / No |
| 3 | Note that EU DCCs will be treated as equivalent to certificates issued by the New Zealand Government for the purposes of providing proof of vaccination and testing. | Yes / No |
| 4 | Note that the New Zealand Government will continue to reserve its sovereign right to establish and adapt over time border measures, including to reflect New Zealand's domestic context and national COVID-19 management strategy. | Yes / No |
| 5 | Note that the EU has a s6(a) that New Zealand should not discriminate on the basis of nationality when applying health related measures for those that are permitted entry to New Zealand (with the exception of New Zealand citizens and resident visa class holders). | Yes / No |
| 6 | s6(a) | Yes / No |
| 7 | Note that there is no one globally adopted approach for verifiable COVID-19 health certificates. The EU DCC has been in use in the EU since 1 July 2021 Australia will be using the ICAO Visible Digital Seal format for certificates New Zealand will be able to recognise a wide range of certificate formats. | Yes / No |
| 8 | Note that officials are engaging bilaterally with jurisdictions outside of the EU DCC trust framework on the mutual technical recognition of COVID-19 health credentials. | Yes / No |
| 9 | Refer a copy of this submission to the Reconnecting New Zealanders Ministerial Group. | Yes / No |

Hon Nanaia Mahuta
Minister of Foreign Affairs / Minita Take Aorere

Rt Hon Jacinda Ardern
Prime Minister

Date: / /

Date: / /

Reconnecting New Zealanders Ministerial Group: New Zealand third country status to the EU Digital COVID Certificate

Hon Grant Robertson
Minister of Finance

Date: / /

Hon Chris Hipkins
Minister for COVID-19 Response

Date: / /

Hon Kris Faafoi
Minister of Immigration

Date: / /

Hon Michael Wood
Minister of Transport

Date: / /

Hon Peeni Henare
Associate Minister of Health (Māori Health)

Date: / /

Hon Dr Ayesha Verrall
Associate Minister of Health

Date: / /

Hon Aupito William Sio
Associate Minister of Health (Pacific Health)

Date: / /

Hon Meka Whaitiri
Minister of Customs

Date: / /

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Reconnecting New Zealanders Ministerial Group: New Zealand third country status to the EU Digital COVID Certificate

Pūrongo – Report

1. This submission follows on from the Ministry of Health's update to the Reconnecting New Zealanders Ministerial Group on 30 September 2021: *The development of New Zealand's digital COVID-19 vaccination certificate*.
2. The Ministry of Health's 30 September update noted that a digital international vaccination certificate available for anyone vaccinated in New Zealand will be available at the beginning of December. The 30 September update signed by Ministers included a noting recommendation that officials had applied for New Zealand's COVID-19 certificates to be accepted into the EU Digital COVID Certificates (EU DCC) trust framework.
3. This submission provides an update on discussions with the EU, and seeks the agreement of the Reconnecting New Zealanders Ministerial Group to New Zealand formally requesting third country status to the EU DCC trust framework. s6(a)
4. The Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet, Customs New Zealand, Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment (Immigration), Ministry of Health, Department of Internal Affairs and Ministry of Transport were consulted on this submission.

What is the EU DCC?

5. The EU DCC sets out a robust framework for the issuance, verification and acceptability of COVID-19 health credentials, consistent with World Health Organisation guidelines. The EU DCC was launched in July 2021 and was primarily designed to achieve safer mobility across the EU during the COVID-19 pandemic. The EU DCC includes the ability for third countries to dock into the system and become part of the EU DCC trust framework.
6. Being part of the EU DCC trust framework would mean that New Zealand issued certificates would be recognised by all countries that join the EU DCC trust framework. It would also enable New Zealand, through the traveller health declaration system, to recognise and trust COVID-19 certificates issued by all countries in the EU DCC trust framework. Without third country status to the EU DCC, New Zealand would need to seek agreement from all EU countries, and other third countries to the EU DCC, that New Zealand's COVID-19 health certificates are recognised and accepted.

What does third country status to the EU DCC mean?

7. Third country status is unilateral recognition by the EU that New Zealand digital health certificates are equivalent to EU DCCs for the purposes of proof of vaccination and testing. New Zealand needs to assure the EU that, in return, we would treat all EU DCCs and other third country certificates to the EU DCC, as equivalent to certificates issued by the New Zealand Government, for the purposes of proof of vaccination and testing. The EU is aware and accepts that a decision on a vaccine standard has not yet been taken in New Zealand.
8. Officials have confirmed with the EU that New Zealand's COVID-19 border settings would not change should New Zealand become a third country to the EU DCC. The New Zealand Government would continue to reserve its sovereign right to establish and adapt border settings that reflect New Zealand's domestic context and national COVID-19

Reconnecting New Zealanders Ministerial Group: New Zealand third country status to the EU Digital COVID Certificate

management strategy. Third country status would not prevent New Zealand from imposing different border entry settings for New Zealand citizens and resident class visa holders, as compared to non-New Zealanders (i.e. reduced quarantine measures). It would also not affect New Zealand's right to use immigration policy to manage entry into New Zealand, for example, permitting only the entry of certain classes of visa holders.

9. The EU has a s6(a) that EU DCC holders permitted to enter New Zealand, should be treated in the same way as other non-New Zealanders. In other words, New Zealand should not discriminate on the basis of nationality when applying health related measures at the border. This is consistent with the risk based assessment under the Reconnecting New Zealanders strategy that determines the entry pathway based on an individual's travel history, not nationality.

10. s6(a)

Why has New Zealand chosen the EU DCC?

11. There is no one globally adopted approach for verifiable health certificates. Given the immediate need for many countries to be able to confirm the health/vaccination status of travellers, numerous formats are being adopted internationally.

12. The EU's DCC and the International Civil Aviation Organisation Visible Digital Seal for Non Constrained Environments (ICAO VDS-NC) have emerged as the two frontrunners. Both formats are aligned to World Health Organisation guidelines, and are broadly similar in concept. To date the EU DCC has been adopted by 27 EU member states, and 16 non-EU countries (including Norway, Iceland, Switzerland and Israel). Officials are aware of a number of other countries in discussions with the EU, including the UK, Singapore and s6(a)

13. Australia will use the ICAO VDS-NC format, and will be the first country to do so. s6(a)

The US is currently not developing federally approved certificates for COVID-19 health credentials.

14. An early assessment of both formats was made, weighing up a range of factors including technical, legal and political considerations. In order to deliver an international certificate by the beginning of December 2021, the EU DCC format was the most pragmatic solution for New Zealand. The EU DCC was already proven and provided open source code for others to use. Open source code was not available for the ICAO VDS-NC until Australia's recent adoption. In terms of inward bound travel to New Zealand, the traveller health declaration system will be able to recognise a range of formats, including the ICAO VDS-NC.

15. Officials are mindful that New Zealand may need to adapt its approach to COVID-19 health credentials as global practice continues to evolve. At some point New Zealand may

Reconnecting New Zealanders Ministerial Group: New Zealand third country status to the EU Digital COVID Certificate

need to offer ICAO VDS-NC formatted COVID-19 health certificates to New Zealanders, in addition to the EU DCC format. Officials are preparing for this possibility and are engaging on the emergence of new standards and monitoring patterns of global adoption.

16. In addition to supporting the enhancement of the New Zealand-EU trade and economic relationship, EU DCC third country status would contribute to our joint response to counter the health and economic impacts of COVID-19 in our respective economies.

A unilateral equivalence decision is required by the EU for New Zealand to become a third country to the EU DCC

17. Equivalence is a process by which the EU recognises the standards or regulatory regime of a non-EU or non-European Economic Area country, even though the standards may not be exactly the same. The granting of equivalence is a unilateral process; it does not require a bilateral arrangement or treaty-level agreement establishing mutual recognition. The EU has signalled that it intends to progress New Zealand's application quickly

18. In order for the EU to commence the equivalence process, officials seek a decision from the Reconnecting New Zealanders Ministerial Group that New Zealand formally requests to become a third country to the EU Digital COVID Certificate trust framework.

19. In respect of New Zealand, as third country status is a unilateral decision, it does not require any changes at the New Zealand end. However, the EU has been clear that they expect New Zealand to likewise recognise as equivalent EU DCC certificates and other third countries to the EU DCC, and have asked for advice on when New Zealand will operationalise this.

20. The process to on board EU DCC certificates is through the traveller health declaration system. The traveller health declaration system will introduce automated authentication of vaccine and test certificates and will be implemented by the end of Q1 2022. It will incrementally replace manual processing with increased functionality to recognise countries' vaccination certificates, including the EU DCC and the ICAO VDS-NC.

Bilateral engagements with other countries outside of the EU DCC framework

21. Officials are working through a process of bilateral engagement with countries outside of the EU DCC platform on the mutual technical recognition of New Zealand and partner countries' COVID-19 health credentials. We will provide Ministers with further updates as this work progresses.

22. Officials are mindful of the potential impact of COVID-19 health certification on the ability of people from Pacific Island countries to travel both intra-regionally and internationally. Officials are working with Australia, Pacific partner governments and regional organisations to develop practical and accessible regional vaccine certification guidelines, and if required, to support Pacific partners to establish systems and processes.

Next steps

23. If Ministers agree that New Zealand formally seeks third country status to the EU DCC, the EU will commence the unilateral equivalence process. Officials have been advised that this will take around two weeks to complete. The decision will enter into force on the day of publication. Officials would work with the EU towards a public announcement in mid-November.