

Attribute the comments below to Chris Bunny, Head of MIQ.

MIQ is sympathetic to the difficult circumstances many New Zealanders are experiencing due to the global pandemic. We work hard to ensure everyone is treated fairly.

We want every New Zealander who's currently abroad who wants to come home to be able to do so. However, we want them to come home to a safe New Zealand, in a safe way. Over the last two years our managed isolation system has been what has kept New Zealanders safe.

MIQ has been a success for New Zealand, helping to safely bring more than 218,000 people here in the midst of a global pandemic, as well as care for over 3,600 community cases.

Every month in managed isolation we accommodate the equivalent of a small New Zealand town - around 12,600 people in 9,000 rooms per 28 days.

There is finite capacity within the MIQ system though, and that's for good reason – Covid-19 is still spreading around the world, and we need to keep New Zealand safe. We constantly have to strike a balance between bringing people into New Zealand and protecting us all from Covid entering the community.

We are seeing a large increase of Omicron cases at the border which means more rooms are needed for Quarantine. We are also monitoring the number of community cases, some of whom are required to come into MIQ.

Managed Isolation and Quarantine is aware that travelling around the world right now is not simple or easy and acknowledges that there are many people in really difficult situations as a result of this global pandemic.

MIQ has an emergency allocation process which exists for limited situations which require urgent travel to New Zealand within the next 14 days. There are currently 400 rooms per fortnight set aside for those who need to travel urgently. This is a last resort option with a very high threshold.

Emergency allocations process in MIQ

All applications for emergency allocation places in managed isolation are assessed on a case-by-case basis, against a set criteria. These decisions are not easy ones to make and we are sympathetic to the distressing situations people applying for an emergency allocation are in.

To be eligible for an emergency allocation, the applicant must be legally entitled to enter New Zealand and the travel must be time-critical (within fourteen days of their intended date of departure). Evidence is required to support all applications to ensure a fair and consistent process.

Right now, MIQ is under pressure like never before and we are currently experiencing very high volumes of emergency allocation requests due to widespread travel disruption around the world.

Emergency Allocation criteria and pregnancy

MBIE regularly evaluates its emergency allocations criteria and will continue to do so. In late October 2021 MIQ looked into how we consider applications relating to pregnancy within Emergency Allocations. It was decided to not make any changes to existing categories in relation to pregnancy, instead it was agreed assessors and decision makers would include

consideration of the unborn child when assessing and making decisions where pregnancy is part of the emergency application.

Pregnancy in and of itself is not considered an emergency under the emergency allocation criteria but certain conditions during pregnancy may mean that the high bar for an emergency is met.

Category 1a could apply to someone who is pregnant if they require access to time-critical medical treatment which has been scheduled in New Zealand and is unavailable or inaccessible in their current location. Category 2a allows people to urgently return to New Zealand to provide critical care for a dependent (i.e: their spouse/partner who is pregnant). To meet the 'critical care' requirement, an applicant's situation must be very serious, and no one else is in a position to assist the person that the application refers to.

More information about emergency allocations is available here:

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