



Cabinet

Minute of Decision

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COVID-19 Vaccine Sequencing Framework: Access to Early Vaccine for People Required to Travel Overseas from New Zealand

Portfolio COVID-19 Response

On 22 March 2021, Cabinet:

- 1 **noted** that the government considers that early COVID-19 vaccine access for required travel should be highly restricted, with high thresholds applying while vaccine supplies remain constrained to prevent “queue-jumping” under the current Sequencing Framework;
- 2 **agreed** to the following baseline requirements that all applicants must meet to be considered for early access to COVID-19 vaccines for required travel:
 - 2.1 applicant is a New Zealand citizen or resident, or visa holder, or someone who has been detained in New Zealand since the closure of international borders;
 - 2.2 not be able to delay or conduct the proposed activity through any other means (e.g. online video communication);
 - 2.3 be required to travel on or before 31 August 2021 and can confirm or prove they are travelling;
 - 2.4 where appropriate, have made arrangements for returning to New Zealand;
 - 2.5 be able to be fully vaccinated before departure in accordance with best practice (e.g. at least three weeks between doses for the Pfizer vaccine) where practicable; and
 - 2.6 be able to provide supporting evidence for all of the above requirements;
- 3 **agreed** that, for people who are required to travel, there are two overarching categories for early vaccine access:
 - 3.1 people representing New Zealand for activities of international significance, which means those who are required to travel to represent New Zealand in an official or recognised capacity (as opposed to private, recreational or commercial) where the proposed service or activity will substantially achieve the national interest; and
 - 3.2 people needing to travel for compassionate reasons, which means they are required to travel for personal reasons related to the critical wellbeing of the applicant, a dependent or an immediate family member;

- 4 **noted** that the following three criteria have been used to assess the potential options for which grounds are included within the national significance and compassionate reasons categories:
- 4.1 the obligation to protect the group or individual because they are providing a critical service that substantially achieves the national interest, or they are providing/receiving a critical service that cannot be undertaken in New Zealand;
 - 4.2 COVID-19 related risks of exposure (infection and transmission) in the destination country and on return to New Zealand, and the risk of harm (serious illness) from COVID-19 infection; and
 - 4.3 alignment with the COVID-19 Elimination Strategy and Immunisation Programme principles – upholding and honouring Te Tiriti o Waitangi, equity, wellbeing and legacy;
- 5 **agreed** that the following be included as grounds for early access under the ‘national significance’ category:
- 5.1 protecting the safety and security of New Zealand’s sovereignty;
 - 5.2 humanitarian purposes;
 - 5.3 participation in a major international event;
 - 5.4 trade negotiations or maintaining/ promoting market access;
- 6 **agreed** that the following be included as grounds for early access under the ‘compassionate reasons’ category:
- 6.1 mitigating a serious risk to the health of the applicant or their dependent;
 - 6.2 ensuring a child or dependent person is provided with appropriate care and protection;
 - 6.3 visiting an immediate family member who is dying;
- 7 **agreed** that the compassionate grounds category immediately excludes the following situations to align with the threshold for managed isolation and quarantine and border exemptions:
- 7.1 attending a funeral, memorial service or tangihanga;
 - 7.2 conducting economic activity such as a commercial or business activity;
 - 7.3 reuniting with family;
 - 7.4 attending school or university;
- 8 **agreed** that decision-making and approvals for applications for early vaccine access sit with the Director-General of Health and/or their nominated delegate;
- 9 **noted** that the Ministry of Health will work with relevant government agencies, including the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, the Ministry for Culture and Heritage and Sport New Zealand, on implementation of the policy under the national significance category;

- 10 **authorised** the Director-General of Health to issue operational guidance and make minor and technical policy amendments to support the operationalisation of the early access process;
- 11 **noted** that if any applications raise significant new policy issues, the Ministry of Health will report back to joint Health Ministers;
- 12 **noted** that the early vaccine process is time-limited and will cease once the Ministry of Health has commenced vaccine rollout to the general population;
- 13 **invited** the Minister for COVID-19 Response to provide an update to Cabinet four weeks after implementation of the early vaccine access process.

Michael Webster
Secretary of the Cabinet