

# Briefing

## Vaccination management of the increasing border workforce as a result of the Quarantine Free Travel Zones

**Date due to MO:** 19 April 2021

**Action required by:** N/A

**Security level:** IN CONFIDENCE

**Health Report number:** 20210875

**To:** Hon Chris Hipkins, Minister for COVID-19 Response

**Copy to:** Hon Andrew Little, Minister of Health

### Contact for telephone discussion

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### Minister's office to complete:

☐ **Approved**

☐ **Decline**

☐ **Noted**

☐ **Needs change**

☐ **Seen**

☐ **Overtaken by events**

☐ **See Minister's Notes**

☐ **Withdrawn**

Comment:

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**Security level:** IN CONFIDENCE

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**To:** Hon Chris Hipkins, Minister for COVID-19 Response

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## Purpose of report

1. This report provides you with information regarding management of vaccination of airport border workers supporting Quarantine Free Travel Zones (QFTZ).

## Summary

2. The opening of QFTZ will increase the workforce at airports across New Zealand by roughly an estimated 3,000-6,000 workers. These changes will see additional workers at each of these airports be classified as border workers and will therefore become eligible, along with their household contacts, for priority access to COVID-19 vaccinations.
3. This report provides an overview of:
  - a. how additional workers will be identified and registered as border workers
  - b. the range of work planned at international airports to support the vaccination of these border workers.

## Recommendation

We recommend you:

- a) **Note** the information in this briefing on the range of work planned to support vaccinations for border workers that will undertake activities in QFTZ.



Joanne Gibbs

**National Director COVID-19 Vaccination  
and Immunisation Programme  
Ministry of Health**

Date: 28/4/2021



Hon Chris Hipkins

**Minister for COVID-19 Response**

Date 30/4/2021

# Vaccination management of the increasing border workforce as a result of Quarantine Free Travel Zones

## Background

1. The possible opening of QFTZ will have impacts on workforce requirements at airports across New Zealand. This impact will be particularly large for any airports that restart receiving international flights as a result of QFTZ, or that see a considerable increase in international flights. Neither Dunedin nor Queenstown Airport currently receive international flights, while the only international flights into Wellington International Airport are adhoc private and charter flights. All three of these airports are expected to receive international flights as part of an QFTZ. In addition, Auckland and Christchurch International Airport will see an increase in international flights as a result of the QFTZ.
2. Under the current COVID-19 Public Health Response (Required Testing) Order 2020 (the Testing Order), QFTZ border workers would be required to undergo mandatory COVID-19 testing. You as Minister for COVID-19 Response have agreed to exclude QFTZ border workers from mandatory testing due to low risk of COVID-19 infection and transmission.

## Summary

### Border worker identification

3. There is a direct link between the Border Worker Testing Register (BWTR) and the COVID-19 Immunisation Register (CIR) and people whose details are included in the BWTR are automatically carried over into the CIR which enables identification of new border workers eligible for vaccination. New border workers identified in CIR are provided to the local District Health Board (DHB) for an appointment.
4. Due to QFTZ border workers being likely excluded from mandatory testing, they will not be added to the BWTR. The BTWR was not designed to support border workers who are not subject to the border order such as those working on QFTZ.
5. The Ministry is currently working to develop a tool to include QFTZ workers on the BWTR and is developing a mechanism to flag this cohort as border workers but not subject to the Border Testing Order. This tool is expected to be developed within four weeks minimum due to complexity around design and operationalisation. Vaccination status will be available for these border workers if they have given consent to share their vaccination status.
6. The Ministry has a process in place for employers to request the COVID-19 vaccination status of their border employees, but only when the employer cannot source this information directly from their employee. The current vaccination status request process is as follows:
  - a. Employer has a conversation directly with employee to get information on vaccination status

- b. If information cannot be provided, the employer requests a standardised template from the Ministry
- c. The employer completes the template with their employee details, encrypts the data and sends it securely back to the Ministry
- d. The Ministry match the employee details to the CIR
- e. The Ministry positively identifies those employees that have received a vaccination (when the employee matches and has given consent for vaccination status to be shared with employer) and securely send back this information to the employer
- f. The turnaround time for this process is usually less than two working days. This may vary depending on the size of employee list requested.

### **Requirements for 'high risk' work**

- 7. A person subject to the Testing Order has relevance to eligibility for vaccination, but vaccination is currently not a legislated requirement for 'high risk' work. Advice from the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment (MBIE) on COVID-19 vaccination requirements for high risk work in managed isolation and quarantine facilities has been developed concurrently for Joint Ministers. However, as QFTZ border workers are at less risk of COVID-19 infection and transmission they are not covered by this advice.

### **Vaccination roll out**

#### *Wellington International Airport*

- 8. Capital and Coast DHB (CCDHB) has established a vaccination clinic at Wellington Airport on 31 March 2021 and it is being used to vaccinate both Air New Zealand and Wellington Airport staff. CCDHB are considering operating the vaccination clinic for an additional week starting 10 May 2021 to enable staff within these groups to attend for first and second vaccinations.
- 9. The identification of the border workers will occur via their employer. Any staff who cannot present during the six-week period will be asked to contact one of the Primary Healthcare Organisation (PHO) run vaccination clinics within the Capital and Coast or Hutt Valley DHB region for an appointment. Communication will be sent to Wellington International Airport to provide details as to how new staff can be vaccinated at one of the PHO clinics in the CCDHB area.
- 10. Additionally, staff who are being vaccinated will be asked to identify their household contacts, which will be entered into CIR. Their contact details will then be sent to the PHOs who will contact the individuals to make a vaccination appointment.

#### *Queenstown International Airport*

- 11. Border workers and their household contacts in the Queenstown and Fiordland area are asked to complete a web form that is being provided to them via their employer.
- 12. Vaccination clinics in Queenstown commenced on Saturday 10 April and will be open to border workers their household contacts and frontline health workers. Southern DHB (SDHB) has set up one clinic near the airport and one clinic in the centre city. SDHB have

advised that the majority of all border workers at the Queenstown International Airport have received their first dose. The clinics will remain open after border workers and their household contacts have been vaccinated and will become the mass vaccination centres for the Queenstown region.

*Dunedin International Airport*

13. A vaccination clinic will commence next week in the Dunedin centre city. SDHB is prioritising arrangements for Queenstown Airport as this is opening to international flights before Dunedin International Airport. SDHB are considering a pop-up vaccination site at Dunedin International Airport if required.

*Auckland International Airport*

14. Auckland Metro DHBs are working with border agencies to understand the increased volume of people who require vaccination. The Auckland International Airport vaccination site was due to close prior to Easter but has been extended for a further six weeks to accommodate the additional vaccination capacity requirement linked to quarantine free travel zones.

ENDS.