

# Grounded Kiwis

## Self-Isolation Proposal

### Introduction

Grounded Kiwis welcomes the Government's review of isolation and quarantine requirements for returnees from overseas, including New Zealand citizens, residents and others entitled to enter New Zealand under current border policy. This document sets out Grounded Kiwis' proposal on self-isolation for returnees. The approaches outlined in this policy draw on experience of other countries in implementing self-isolation strategies and have been reviewed by a group of scientific advisors. We present a pragmatic, risk-based approach that is feasible to implement. It also balances the Government's interests in enabling New Zealanders to enter New Zealand while keeping New Zealand safe.

### Pre-Departure and On-Arrival Testing

All returnees would require a negative pre-departure PCR test taken no more than 72 hours before the scheduled departure time of their first international departure. The exceptions to this requirement, approved laboratories and form of proof would be the same as the current requirements for pre-departure tests.<sup>1</sup>

Returnees would also be given a rapid antigen test at the airport upon their arrival in New Zealand and a saliva sample would be taken for PCR testing. If the rapid antigen test comes back positive, the returnee will be deemed category three and must go to MIQ. However, the returnee may be released for self-isolation or no isolation (if otherwise eligible in accordance with this policy) if their PCR test result is negative.

### Categorizing Returnees by Risk

Returnees would be categorized into three categories:

#### Category 1

Have been only in low risk locations for 14 days<sup>2</sup> prior to departure and are fully vaccinated.<sup>3</sup>

#### Category 2

- Have been only in low risk locations for 14 days prior to departure and are not fully vaccinated; or
- Have been only in medium risk locations (or low and medium risk locations) for 14 days prior to departure and are fully vaccinated.

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<sup>1</sup> See - <https://covid19.govt.nz/travel/pre-departure-tests-to-enter-new-zealand/>

<sup>2</sup> This does not include being in transit in an airport in a medium risk country, provided the returnee remains in transit and does not leave the airport.

<sup>3</sup> "Fully vaccinated" means having completed a full series of COVID vaccines at least 14 days before the scheduled departure time of the first international departure. "Fully immunized" is often used in New Zealand once 14 days have passed after completing the vaccine series. The vaccine must be a vaccine approved by a government or approval authority.

### Category 3

- Have been in a medium risk location at any point in the 14 days prior to departure and are not fully vaccinated; or
- Have been in a high risk location at any point in the 10 days prior to departure, regardless of vaccination status; or
- Test positive for COVID-19 on arrival in New Zealand.

A location is categorized as low risk, medium risk or high risk using the factors in the below table. For each location, the factor in the highest risk box applies. For example, a location with 0-75 cases per 100,00 but only 55% of the population fully vaccinated is a medium risk country. Individual states of Australia and the United States are each considered to be separate locations. If a new variant of concern arises or testing or reporting is not considered adequate, a location can be classified as a higher risk than shown in the table. Locations' risk categorizations should be reconsidered by the Government every three weeks and published on MBIE's website.

	Low risk	Medium risk	High risk
14-day case notification rate per 100 000 in relevant country	0 - 75	76 - 300	301+
% vaccination in relevant country	70%+ of the total population is fully vaccinated, which is likely to be about 80% of the eligible population vaccinated based on New Zealand's current eligibility requirement.	50-69% of the total population is fully vaccinated, which is likely to be about 60% of the eligible population is fully vaccinated based on New Zealand's current eligibility requirement.	Less than 50% of the total population is fully vaccinated.

### Isolation Requirements for Returnees

We set out two phases below. Phase One could be implemented immediately, whereas Phase Two would commence once New Zealand reaches 80% of the 12+ population fully vaccinated. In each phase, the isolation requirements differ based on the individual's risk category. The need for amendments or the completion of Phase Two should be considered on a monthly basis.

#### Phase One: Interim self-isolation proposal to be implemented now

Given New Zealand's pressing need for a form of self-isolation for returnees, a limited self-isolation process could be implemented now as an interim measure, as follows:

- **Category 1 returnees:** Self-isolation for five days, with testing on arrival and day four. If a negative test result is received after day four testing, the individual is released on day five.

- **Category 2 returnees:** Self- isolation for 10 days, with testing on arrival and days three and nine. If a negative test result is received after day nine testing, the individual is released on day ten.
- **Category 3 returnees:** Not eligible for self-isolation and would stay in MIQ for 14 days.

### Phase Two: Medium-term self-isolation proposal

Once New Zealand reaches 80% of the 12+ population fully vaccinated:

- **Category 1 returnees:** No self-isolation requirement if pre-departure and on-arrival tests are negative.
- **Category 2 returnees:** Self-isolation for five days, with testing on arrival and day four. If a negative test result is received after day four testing, the individual is released.
- **Category 3 returnees:** Self- isolation for 10 days, with testing on arrival and days three and nine. If a negative test result is received after day nine testing, the individual is released on day ten. If the returnee is deemed to be extremely high risk (e.g. unvaccinated, and returning from a country where new variants have been identified) 10 day MIQ may be required.

## Self-Isolation Requirements

### Self-isolation location

On arrival in New Zealand, returnees must declare their self-isolation location, plan for provisions throughout the self-isolation period, and anyone who will be in their bubble. This could be the returnee's own home, another person's home or rented stand-alone accommodation (including Airbnb). The location must have cellular coverage or reliable wi-fi.

Anyone else staying at this location during this period must register to join the returnee's bubble and observe the same self-isolation requirements.

**Phase One:** The location must be within 150 km by road of the airport of arrival into New Zealand. The location cannot have a shared ventilation system.

**Phase Two:** No radius applies, and the self-isolation location may be anywhere in New Zealand. The location may also be a designated self-isolation hotel, which has registered as being able to accept self-isolating travellers.

### Travel to self-isolation destination

After receiving a negative rapid antigen test result, returnees may travel from the airport to their self-isolation location directly by private car either by themselves or with others in their bubble. They must not stop on their journey or detour for petrol, food, or any other reason. Public transport and cars or vans shared with non-bubble passengers are not allowed.

**Phase One:** If the returnee rents a car, the pickup must be by a contactless process. Additional domestic flights to reach a destination are not permitted, unless such flights are designated red flights (e.g. from Auckland to Christchurch or Wellington).

**Phase Two:** Following a negative rapid antigen test on arrival, returnees may fly from the airport of arrival into New Zealand to another airport using the most direct commercial service reasonably

available. Permitted transportation from the airport to the self-isolation location or testing locations now also includes taxis, car services (such as Uber) or cars driven by non-bubble family, friends or other individuals, in each case provided the returnee keeps a log of the names and contact details of the driver and uses the NZ Covid Tracer app as relevant, and masks are worn for the duration of the journey.

### **Self-isolation requirements**

Once in the self-isolation location, the returnee and anyone in the bubble must stay there for the period of self-isolation, and must not leave the property for any reason except in an emergency, when escorted by an authorized person or for testing.

No visitors are allowed, except for emergency or other essential services (e.g., fire, ambulance, police, tradespeople for urgent repairs). Contactless deliveries are allowed. Checks will be performed periodically to ensure compliance, including by unscheduled phone calls (where video confirmation may be required), home visits by police or Government officials, and other appropriate and cost permissive technology developed for such purposes in other countries (such as wrist bracelet location tracking, mobile apps tracking location and biometric data etc).

### **Testing**

Testing may be done at a testing site near the self-isolation location, or saliva samples may be taken at the self-isolation location and dropped off at a designated testing location. The same requirements apply to transportation to and from the testing site as apply to transportation from the airport. If an individual tests positive for COVID-19, they and their bubble must follow the same guidance and period of isolation for any positive COVID-19 case in New Zealand.<sup>4</sup>

### **Penalties**

Breaches of the terms of self-isolation may be punished by fines and a transfer to MIQ for the remainder of their isolation period, so as to incentivise people to comply with the rules.

### **Ongoing Assessment of Self-Isolation Requirements**

The medium-term self-isolation requirements must be reviewed at least monthly to determine whether they could be changed or abolished in light of changing circumstances in New Zealand and giving consideration to practices in other countries. To ensure accountability and transparency, the results of that review, and underlying reasons for decisions, must be promptly published on MBIE's website.

### **No Fees**

In order to have an equitable approach that is consistent with self-isolation for those already in New Zealand who must self-isolate, there are no fees for self-isolation for returnees. This self-isolation approach would be substantially cheaper for the Government to implement and enforce than the current MIQ policy.

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<sup>4</sup><https://www.health.govt.nz/our-work/diseases-and-conditions/covid-19-novel-coronavirus/covid-19-health-advice-public/caring-yourself-and-others-who-have-or-may-have-covid-19-home>