



# (MIQ, 2022b)

## 20 January room release postponed

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Statement by Head of MIQ Chris Bunney.

Due to the unprecedented number of Omicron cases coming into New Zealand and MIQ, a decision has been made to postpone the next room release scheduled for 20 January.

There has been a 10-fold increase in positive COVID-19 cases at the border compared to December. The seven day rolling average of border cases is 33.

The decision on when the next lobby will be held will be made in coming weeks as part of Cabinet's considerations on the border and Reconnecting New Zealand.

We appreciate that this will be disappointing for many people wanting to come back to New Zealand. The government's strategy is to minimise the risk of Omicron in New Zealand as much as possible.

There will be room releases in the future for people wanting to secure rooms, however right now we cannot proceed as planned.

Following the Government's announcement in December about the delay to Reconnecting New Zealand and ways to minimise the risk of Omicron, MIQ has been adapting in a rapidly evolving environment. We are trying to navigate a range of uncertainties and manage significant capacity pressures (detailed below), which means we are not in a position to go ahead with a room release at this time.

For people who need to travel urgently and meet the eligibility criteria, they can apply for an Emergency Allocation. This is a last resort option with a very high threshold.

[Emergency Allocation requests\(/travel-to-new-zealand/secure-your-place-in-managed-isolation/emergency-allocation-requests/\)](#)

Capacity pressures - 10-day stay and Omicron

We are seeing a large increase of Omicron cases at the border which means more rooms are needed for Quarantine.

In addition, we are monitoring the number of community cases, some of whom are required to come into MIQ. We are constantly assessing the needs of the people coming into the MIQ system, which means at times we may need to convert managed isolation facilities to quarantine facilities. This means a further reduction in managed isolation rooms.

Also the move to a 10-day MIQ stay just before Christmas has resulted in a reduction in overall MIQ capacity, by approximately 30%. Vouchers for January 2022 and February 2022 were issued over the past few months based on a 7 day stay, which means we now need to carefully manage our capacity for these months. We are working hard to make sure we honour all vouchers that have been issued.

We have been providing vouchers to people affected by the delay of Step One of Reconnecting New Zealand, with 430 rooms already allocated as of 18 January 2022 (representing 710 people). More information about this can be found on our website.

[Travellers from Australia\(/travel-to-new-zealand/entering-new-zealand-in-2022/travellers-from-australia/\)](#)

Flight schedules impacted by Omicron

The global impact of Omicron is also resulting in significant travel disruption, as airlines manage staffing levels. We are seeing an increase in the number of flights being cancelled and rescheduled due to Omicron, which has a flow-on effect for MIQ capacity. We are working hard to accommodate people where we can, while trying to manage our capacity constraints.

<https://www.miq.govt.nz/about/news/20-january-room-release-postponed/>

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