

19 July 2021

Hon Chris Hipkins
Minister for COVID-19 Response
Parliament Building
WELLINGTON

Dear Minister Hipkins

Feedback to Ministry of Health on briefing titled Quarantine-Free Travel Zone with Australia: Key Lessons and Process Improvements

The COVID-19 Independent Continuous Review, Improvement and Advice Group (the Group) received a request from the Ministry of Health (the Ministry) to provide feedback on the joint Ministry and Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet's (DPMC) briefing *Quarantine-Free Travel Zone with Australia: Key Lessons and Process Improvements* [20211217].

The below feedback was provided to the Ministry via the DPMC Secretariat on 09 July 2021. The Ministry acknowledged the feedback noting that they will work with DPMC on a further iteration which will be provided to the Group in due course.

We agree with you (and as you noted in your feedback to officials) that the proactive nature of this work by officials is commendable. As we have been invited to provide a critical lens for continuous improvement, we have provided some comments on the content and framing of the paper.

Comments on content

We would like to see a clearer connection throughout to the public health and health facility functions that will need to be optimised as we move towards relaxing border restrictions in the next year. Additionally, we recommended including a clear summary of implications, if any, for each of these so these functions are established 'front of mind' moving forward. This could be in a format that future briefings also adhere to such as a table or other option.

We have also questioned whether the requirements of incoming tourists have been reviewed or not. For example, is it mandatory to scan?

Acknowledging that the paper was written prior to the recent Wellington Quarantine-Free Travel (QFT) COVID-19 scare, we noted that it appeared (and from comments we have received) that there were issues from the recent Wellington scare related to being able to stand up testing quickly. This is despite it being clear that an outbreak threat could happen anywhere in New Zealand for some time now. Given the number of debriefs that are referred

to, it would be expected that scenario planning around this type of highly predictable scenario is mentioned.

Related to the above, it would be helpful if it were clearer how many debriefs were done and why, and how the collation and summary were brought together.

Structure and focus of the paper

In terms of the paper's structure and focus, we found the paper too dense and repetitive. More brevity in the writing would help to convey clear messaging and emphasise the key lessons. Simplicity and clarity are essential if the aim is to provide busy decision makers with an understanding of the issues and whether they have to make a decision on anything or not. To better frame the paper, the structure could have been, for example:

- What are the key lessons?
- What changes did they make?
- What monitoring is in place?

It could be more useful, in place of the table presented, to include a table that summarises what issues came up for each episode, and what actions have been taken and completed to improve the systems, and what actions are in progress (plus target date for completion). This is more straightforward and clearer for monitoring what actions are identified and which are completed.

We would like to see, in the light of the above points, a better forward look with opinion and recommendations for the short-, medium- and longer-term about the key components of QFT. These should specifically be about pre-flight and arrival testing and processes, even considering the point made about continuous improvement at the border.

Appendix 2: System process map

We have assumed the figure on the QFT system is still a work in progress. We provided comment that the subtitle seems unnecessary, the flows do not seem to work for particular individuals at times, and the labelling of individuals is confusing (for example, who is the Director of Health?).

We have also noted to the Ministry that we are shifting our working style to providing feedback in real time rather than a review and report-type approach. In light of that shift, we have indicated that we look forward to being able to provide advice on continuous improvement opportunities alongside the development of briefings, plans and so forth going forward.

Yours sincerely



Sir Brian Roche

Chair of the COVID-19 Independent Continuous Review, Improvement and Advice Group