

Hon Chris Hipkins

MP for Remutaka

Minister for COVID-19 Response

Minister of Education

Minister for the Public Service

Leader of the House



File No. OIA0365

Ben

fyi-request-16887-2c9d0afb@requests.fyi.org.nz

Dear Ben,

Thank you for your email of 25 September 2021 requesting the following under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act):

I would like to know how much managed isolation has so far cost the New Zealand tax payer to date.

Is there not a cheaper alternative i.e. isolate at a property with no one entering or leaving that property, monitored with ankle bracelets and / or security cameras.

The Managed Isolation and Quarantine (MIQ) system has played a central role in preventing COVID-19 from entering New Zealand communities across the border. MIQ is a complex system of accommodation facilities, personnel, information systems, and testing regimes that enable positive COVID-19 cases to be detected early after arrival to New Zealand and to be isolated from the community. It has allowed New Zealanders to return home during the global pandemic in a safe and managed way. Since April 2020, over 176,000 people have passed through MIQ, and over 1300 border cases of COVID-19 have been identified at MIQ facilities.

The MIQ costs incurred by the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment (MBIE) from 1 July 2020 to 31 August 2021, totalled \$915.91million (excluding GST). This amount relates to costs including the contracts with the hotels being used as MIQFs, transporting guests to and from airports and facilities, security and MBIE staff employed in the MIQ Branch, whether front-line or in MBIE's head office in Wellington.

The MBIE costings above do not include the costs to pay other frontline agency employees' salaries and any other assorted costs i.e. personnel employed by the relevant District Health Boards (DHBs), the New Zealand Defence Force (NZDF), the New Zealand Police (Police) and the New Zealand Aviation Security Service (Avsec).

COVID-19 Response Paper 5 – Managed Isolation and Quarantine (MIQ) operating model and funding (CAB-20-SUB-0095) and Managed Isolation and Quarantine (MIQ) Operating Model and Funding (CAB-20-MIN-0511), provide details of the current MIQ operating model and the funding allocated to MBIE, NZDF, Police, Ministry of Health, Avsec and the New Zealand Customs Service to deliver is part of New Zealand's COVID-19 Response. These documents can be found at: [covid19.govt.nz/assets/resources/Proactive-release-8-March-2021/5-MIQ-Operating-Model-and-Funding-Cabinet-Paper-Redacted-.pdf](https://www.covid19.govt.nz/assets/resources/Proactive-release-8-March-2021/5-MIQ-Operating-Model-and-Funding-Cabinet-Paper-Redacted-.pdf)

Further information on COVID-19 Response spending by each Agency is published in the annual report of the individual Agency. These can be found on the Agency websites.

The Government's framework for 'Reconnecting New Zealanders to the world' was unveiled on 12 August 2021, by the Prime Minister. This is the Government's plan to safely re-open our borders and develop new ways for people to travel to and from New Zealand. This framework for travel involves an individualised risk based approach. More details can be accessed at: www.covid19.govt.nz/reconnecting-new-zealand-to-the-world/.

As part of this plan, the Government recently announced a Self-Isolation Pilot that will take place between October and December this year. Self-isolation is part of the plan for re-opening borders and allowing more people to visit and return home to New Zealand without the requirement to enter into MIQ. Self-isolation would allow for greater freedoms for travellers, potentially lower costs, and reduced demand for places in MIQ.

The Pilot will see 150 people, required to travel internationally for business purposes, self-isolate on arrival in Auckland or Christchurch. The pilot will also allow travel for a small number of Ministers and Officials attending overseas events as New Zealand government delegates. Numbers and locations are limited to ensure the health workforce and MIQ systems and staff have the capacity to establish, manage and complete the pilot successfully.

Pilot participants must comply with a range of requirements in self-isolation. These requirements will be set out in the COVID-19 Public Health Response (Isolation and Quarantine) Order 2020. These requirements include that participants:

- Remain in their place of self-isolation for 14 days
- Isolate alone, or with other participants in their travelling party
- Not allow any visitors to enter the premises, aside from medical staff for testing purposes and emergency or other authorised essential services (e.g. fire, ambulance, Police, tradespeople for urgent repairs)
- Comply with health-related requirements (e.g. testing).

Participants will also be required to comply with a monitoring regime while in self-isolation. Officials have considered a number of compliance monitoring options. These include electronic monitoring using wrist or ankle bracelets, electronic monitoring using app-based technology, and conducting regular/random phone calls (with and without the use of geolocation). The monitoring regime for the Self-Isolation Pilot is in the process of being finalised, and will be made public once decisions have been made.

A participant who is found to have breached self-isolation requirements must enter MIQ, at their own cost, and they can be charged with a criminal offence that carries a penalty on conviction of up to six months imprisonment or a fine of up to \$4,000.

The Self-Isolation Pilot will test some of the systems and processes that would be needed to roll out self-isolation more widely. It will be evaluated for the purpose of informing a wider scale roll-out of self-isolation.

Further information about the Self-Isolation Pilot is available at:

<https://www.miq.govt.nz/travel-to-new-zealand/self-isolation-pilot/eligibility-criteria-and-self-isolation-requirements/>

Costs are not the guiding principle behind New Zealand's response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The New Zealand government's focus has always been on public health and safety.

You have the right to seek an investigation and review by the Ombudsman of this decision. Information about this process is available at www.ombudsman.parliament.nz or freephone 0800 802 602.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'CH', is positioned above the printed name.

Chris Hipkins
Minister for COVID-19 Response