

1 April 2021

Hon Chris Hipkins  
**Minister for COVID-19 Response**

cc Hon Dr Ayesha Verrall  
**Associate Minister of Health**

## **Introduction to the Travel Health Pass Work Programme**

### **Purpose**

To respond to your request of 22 March 2021 for a brief overview of the vaccines passport work otherwise known as the Travel Health Pass Work Programme (the Programme). We are aiming to provide a more substantive briefing to you in the week of 5 April 2021.

### **The Programme focuses on the role of COVID-19 vaccination certificates in facilitating travel in and out of New Zealand**

1. With COVID-19 vaccinations starting to be rolled out globally and in New Zealand, vaccination certificates meeting rigorous health criteria, and operationally sound, are seen as offering an opportunity to ease border restrictions without compromising public health. A vaccination certificate is a medical certificate, either digital or a smart paper solution that enables the holder to show proof of vaccination.
2. Work is underway, led by the Ministries of Health and Transport together with a group of government agencies<sup>1</sup>, to develop verifiable vaccine certification to facilitate international travel. This will provide information on a traveller's COVID-19 vaccination status that will meet health conditions of entry required by New Zealand and other countries. As the eventual form and content of such certification must meet international standards still to be agreed, as well as our own, New Zealand is working closely with the World Health Organization and other relevant certifying bodies, such as the International Civil Aviation Organisation, to ensure alignment.
3. The Programme sits within the 'Keep It Out' and 'Prepare for It' pillars of the Elimination Strategy and within a wider programme led by the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet (DPMC) around options to reopen the border. Governance of the Programme sits under the Border Executive Board.
4. We are increasingly likely to see countries and the international travel industry (e.g. aviation, cruise etc.) requiring verification of a traveller's COVID-19 health status (vaccination and/or testing) to enter a country. Work, as part of the Programme, is balancing keeping abreast of standards and international developments while ensuring whatever solution is implemented in New Zealand works best for us and is broadly consistent with our international partners.

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<sup>1</sup> Other agencies include the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, the New Zealand Customs Service, the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment (including Immigration NZ), the Department of Internal Affairs, the DPMC, and the Treasury.

5. Although a digital vaccine certificate is not yet available, in the meantime everyone who receives a COVID-19 vaccination in New Zealand is provided with a paper vaccine certificate card, linked to the persons' National Health Index. While this can be used as evidence of vaccination at overseas borders it is vulnerable to forgery and may not be accepted as a criteria for entry.

**The Programme is underway and is broken up into two critical areas**

6. In broad terms, the Programme consists of two fundamental areas:

o Health information:

[REDACTED]

o Border processing:

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

8. Designing an end-to-end process is critical for government agencies, airlines, airports, ports and travellers. Other key policy questions which are being looked at across government, and that feed into the Programme, relate to ensuring health criteria [REDACTED]

Withheld under section 9(2)(f)(iv) of the Official Information Act 1982

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[Redacted]

Withheld under section 9(2)(f)(iv) of the Official Information Act 1982

**There is significant work underway internationally on travel health passes**

9. We have been engaging in a number of international fora so that we have wide visibility of emerging industry and government developments. We are prioritising our engagements to maximise the influence New Zealand can have, and value we gain. We are engaging with:

- o the two critical international standard setting bodies:
  - the World Health Organization; and
  - the International Civil Aviation Organization
- o [Redacted]
- o the International Air Transport Association (IATA), representing 260 international airlines, who is currently developing and trialling a travel pass app with a number of airlines (including Air New Zealand).

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**Indicative timeline for more substantive advice**

10. We are aiming to provide you with a more detailed overview of the Programme in the week of 5 April 2021. The Border Executive Board has considered the direction of the Programme ahead of this advice. The advice will help to support discussions on the Government's long-term border re-opening strategy at the meeting of the COVID-19 Ministerial Group scheduled for 15 April 2021. This overview will lay out the key considerations, and timing of next steps over the coming months. The briefing also provides a summary of current health pass-type platforms being trialled to varying degrees globally (including the IATA Travel Pass app).

11. The table below provides you with indicative key milestones and dates that you should be aware of.

Action/milestone	Date
Provision of detailed overview briefing for the COVID-19 Minister's meeting scheduled for 15 April 2021	Week of 5 April 2021
[Redacted]	[Redacted]
[Redacted]	[Redacted]
[Redacted]	[Redacted]

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**Recommendations**

We recommend you:

1 note the contents of this briefing

Yes  No

2 note that we will aim to provide you with a more detailed overview of the Programme on the week of 5 April 2021.



Brent Johnston  
Acting Policy Director, Ministry of  
Transport

1 / 4 / 21

Hon Chris Hipkins  
Minister for COVID-19 Response

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Minister's office to complete:

Approved

Declined

Seen by Minister

Not seen by Minister

Overtaken by events

Comments

**Contacts**

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