



# BORDER EXECUTIVE BOARD

## Briefing

### Implementation of pre-departure testing as Trans-Tasman travel resumes

<b>Date due to MO:</b>	30/06/2021	<b>Action required by:</b>	30/06/2021
<b>Security level:</b>	IN-CONFIDENCE	<b>BEB Report:</b>	21/026
		<b>[agency] Report:</b>	
<b>To:</b>	Hon Chris Hipkins, Minister for COVID-19 Response		
<b>Copy to:</b>	QFT Ministers		

### Contact for telephone discussion

Name	Position	Telephone
Christine Stevenson	Chair of the Border Executive Board	s 9(2)(a) OIA

### Minister's office to complete:

- |   |                                    |  |
|---|------------------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Approved             | <input type="checkbox"/> Decline   | <input type="checkbox"/> Noted               |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Needs change         | <input type="checkbox"/> Seen      | <input type="checkbox"/> Overtaken by events |
| <input type="checkbox"/> See Minister's Notes | <input type="checkbox"/> Withdrawn |  |

Comment:



# Implementation of PDT as Trans-Tasman travel resumes

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**Security level:** IN CONFIDENCE      **Date:** 30 / 06 / 2021

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**To:** Hon Chris Hipkins, Minister for COVID-19 Response

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## Purpose of the briefing

1. On Tuesday 29 June 2021, the Government announced that pre-departure testing (PDT) would become a condition of travel under Quarantine Free Travel (QFT) arrangements with Australia in response to the current COVID-19 situation there when travel resumes with some states from 4 July 2021.
2. The Border Executive Board is leading PDT implementation for all air travel from Australia, including how layered assurance will be provided across the passenger journey. The timing of this announcement allows a lead in time for agencies and airlines to prepare for these changes and for travellers to get a valid pre-departure test.
3. QFT flights with PDT requirements will resume from ACT, Victoria, Tasmania and South Australia from 11.59pm on 4 July 2021. The expectation set by Ministers is that other Australian ports will also be subject to PDT requirements when QFT reopens.
4. This report provides information on how PDT could be implemented, with a focus on compliance and enforcement. It covers what border agencies can do to monitor and enforce compliance, as well as what airlines can do to support passenger compliance.
5. The decision that PDT should become a condition of travel under QFT arrangements with Australia, without certainty about how long this measure may need to be in place, will require agencies and airlines to consider longer term assurance arrangements. This is different from the 'time-limited surge capacity' resourcing situation agencies used recently for flights from Melbourne requiring passenger PDT.
6. Officials are undertaking further work to better understand the impact of PDT requirements on their respective agencies and engaging further with airlines. Officials will report back to Ministers on 6 July 2021.



## Recommendations

We recommend you:

- a) **Note** the advice provided by officials on the implementation of PDT, including compliance and enforcement activities, under QFT arrangements with Australia.  Yes /  No
- b) **Direct** officials to report back outlining any resourcing implications for agencies on Australia-wide PDT requirements on 6 July 2021.  Yes /  No
- c) **Agree** that this briefing is proactively released, with any appropriate redaction, including the airline assessment in the Compliance Summary Table in paragraph 26, where information would have been withheld under the Official Information Act 1982, in September 2021.  Yes /  No

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s 9(2)(a) OIA

Christine Stevenson

**Chair of the Border Executive Board**

Date:

Hon Chris Hipkins

**Minister for COVID-19 Response**

Date: 30/6/2021



# Implementation of PDT as Trans-Tasman travel resumes

## Background

7. This briefing provides advice on how pre-departure testing (PDT) requirements will be implemented. These requirements will apply from commencement of the limited Trans-Tasman QFT resumption at 23:59 hours on Sunday 4 July 2021. Ministers have signalled that this requirement will remain under review. The duration of PDT requirements may have implications for implementation and resourcing.

## Ensuring compliance with pre-departure testing requirements

8. The primary onus is on the passenger to comply with QFT requirements. Travellers will need to return a negative COVID-19 RT-PCR test within 72 hours prior to departure from Australia. Travellers will be required to hold evidence (including lab results) throughout their journey. Layered assurance processes are designed to manage the risk to New Zealand within existing resource and system constraints.
9. Monitoring compliance and enforcement are primarily the responsibility of government agencies. Airlines can, however, play an important supporting role.
10. There are two key places where physical checks can take place:
  - Pre-boarding:** checks on eligibility to travel, including PDT, are preferable as it means risk is kept off-shore. Pre-boarding checks comprise a combination of airlines' pre-boarding checks and spot-checking by Airline Liaison Officers (ALOs). However, the Government's presence is limited offshore.
  - On arrival:** Assurance checking is supported as passengers arrive in New Zealand by eGate questions that identify (by self-reporting) any travellers who have been in locations of interest and by random sampling of PDT by New Zealand Customs Service (Customs) officers.

## The passenger journey

### Pre-departure communication

11. Consistent, clear, simple and timely communications across the entire passenger journey are essential. A differentiated approach to lifting pauses across states will create complexity, and may lead to traveller confusion.
12. Previous experience with PDT for Victoria identified confusion from travellers in relation to the type of test, the evidence that is required, and where they should go to get a test (e.g. a free COVID-19 test with result notified by text message will not provide sufficient evidence of a valid PDT). These areas will be prioritised for clarification in communications. Clear instructions will be provided that travellers will be required to return a negative COVID-19 RT-PCR test.



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- Airlines will send communications directly to passengers via email and text before a flight, directing them to the requirements on the *Unite Against COVID* website.

### At the airport

#### *Passenger confirmation*

- Airlines will implement an additional pre-departure question, or equivalent confirmation statement, for passengers to confirm they meet the PDT requirements

#### Pre-departure compliance checks

#### *Airlines*

- Airline systems, particularly at big ports, are set up in a way where in-person contact with airline staff at check-in is minimised. For Melbourne, airlines were asked to undertake spot checks of up to approximately 10% of passengers (the limit of what airlines had advised they could accommodate). Checks took place either before electronic check-in, or at the check-in counter where counter check-in was available (e.g. Jetstar flights and smaller ports).

16.

s9(2)(b)(ii) OIA

17.

- Agencies are engaging with airlines on how they could respond to different scenarios. This will include looking at the picture across airports and what can be done between ALOs and airlines to address any particular gaps.

#### *Airline Liaison Officers (ALOs)*

- Immigration NZ advise that they currently have three ALOs, one each based in Melbourne, Brisbane, and Sydney who have assisted with spot checks of PDT. An additional three ALOs were scheduled to be deployed to Australia. These ALOs will be sent to Australia by Sunday July 4 and all three deployed to any airport as required.
- Further, it is possible an additional three ALOs could be mobilised within 7 to 10 days, bringing the total number of deployed ALOs to nine should the situation warrant it. Immigration NZ can fund this resource from baseline for a short period.
- Immigration NZ advise these numbers of ALOs can undertake a number of PDT checks, but they cannot check all passengers on a flight. The ALOs have other functions they perform in providing assurance across QFT.



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### Compliance checks upon arrival in New Zealand

22. Customs estimates that it can conduct pre-departure testing assurance checks of up to 30 percent of arrivals from all of Australia, with existing resources. This requires eGates remaining open. This level of random checks was met (and exceeded with 41 percent achieved) in the Melbourne response as Customs only had to provide assurance across flights from Victoria.
23. Customs estimates that with reduced volumes of flights and passengers, from limited (four) states, assurance checks could be increased to up to 50 percent of all arriving passengers. Any greater compliance activity by Customs would require additional staff and funding.
24. As noted in paragraph 22, Customs can conduct pre-departure testing assurance checks of up to 30% of passengers arriving from all of Australia within existing resources. Greater compliance activity by Customs would require additional resources and funding. This is currently being worked through by Customs officials.
25. Depending on the particular New Zealand airport, staff would be located to identify a random cohort from each flight who would be selected for assurance checks.

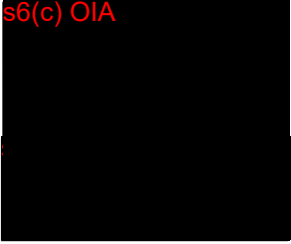
### Compliance summary table

26. This table sets out those activities specifically related to checking traveller PDT compliance. It sets out the measures put in place for the Melbourne response, what may be achieved for the four state response and an Australia-wide response.

	Melbourne returns settings	Limited four state response	Australia-wide
<b>Airlines</b>	Request for 10% spot checks	s9(2)(b)(ii) OIA	s9(2)(b)(ii) OIA
<b>Airline liaison officers (ALOs)</b>	3 ALOs (based in Sydney (in lockdown), Melbourne and Brisbane)	If opened State by State the ALOs could be moved to provide coverage across those ports.	Could increase to 9 ALOs for a short period of time but would require additional funding. Will impact on INZ ability to provide on eligibility



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	<p>6 ALOs by 4 July</p> <p>Cannot do 100% PDT checks</p>		<p>traveller assurance on movements. May only be able to rely on self-reporting.</p> <p>INZ are expanding the pool of available ALOs to provide longer term capability but further deployments would require additional funding. (this is a short term employment arrangement).</p> <p>Increasing the number of ALOs would require the agreement of the Australian Government.</p>
<b>Customs</b>	<p>Request for 30% random checks (achieved 41%)</p>	<p>Assurance provided with 50% random checks across limited (four) states can be achieved within existing resources</p>	<p>Assurance checks of up to 30% of arrivals from all of Australia within existing resources</p> <p>s6(c) OIA</p>  <p>Additional resourcing and funding would be required in short- to medium-term.</p>

### Enforcement of PDT requirements

27. There are currently limited options to enforce QFT PDT requirements. Travellers who are unable to demonstrate evidence of a PDT on arrival are currently considered no longer eligible for QFT and therefore come under the Air Border Order. As a result they must enter a managed isolation facility for 14 days
28. On Monday 28 June DPMC provided Minister Hipkins advice recommending additional compliance and enforcement mechanisms to assist in deterring and addressing non-compliance with QFT conditions, including pre-departure testing. This included making it an infringement offence carrying a financial penalty under the Air Border Order to arrive in New Zealand without a valid pre-departure test result.
29. It is planned that these changes will be in place by Sunday 4 July 2021.



**Trade-offs for agencies**

30. Agencies are constrained in their ability to respond to the various unfolding QFT situations. There is no readily available spare resource that can be easily stood-up. The main trade-off being made by agencies is to deprioritise other areas of work which may result in reduced services and some other border risks not being managed to the usual standard.
31. Officials will report back to Ministers on 6 July 2021 with more detailed information on the resourcing implications, costings and funding impacts of scaling-up to provide assurance for Australia-wide PDT compliance checks into the future.
32. Officials have started work on a longer-term plan for a safe and smart border. A Government online pre-departure declaration (i.e. Travel Health Pass) would enable agencies to undertake digital assurance checks for all passengers.

**Next steps**

33. Officials will report back to Ministers on 6 July with more detailed information on resourcing implications, costings and funding impacts.
34. Officials will continue to work on a longer-term plan for a safe and smart border and provide separate advice to Ministers.

ENDS.